

Kitchen Care Guide

The kitchen is the heart of the home - we want to help you look after it

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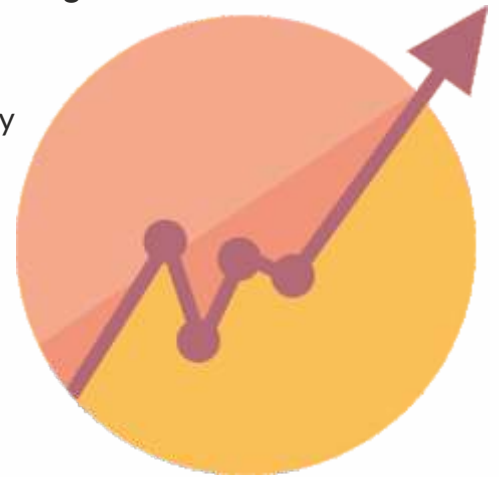
According to an article posted by the Daily Mail in 2011, the average British homeowner now spends more time in their kitchen than in their living room.

Additionally, kitchens have doubled in size over the last century to the extent that they've become the heart of the modern home and, in smaller homes, the dining room is gradually becoming obsolete.

Given that the kitchen is typically now used for far more than just cooking, it tends to get even more wear and tear.

As such, caring for your new kitchen after installation is more important than ever, particularly since you'll need to adhere by certain manufacturer guidelines anyway to ensure you don't void the warranty.

Properly caring for your kitchen units and fittings will help you get more out of it while also maximising its lifespan. In this guide, we'll look at the important things you need to know if you have just installed a new kitchen.



1. Preventative Maintenance

A kitchen typically gets quite a beating over its lifetime, so it makes sense to adopt a preventative maintenance routine to keep the wear and tear down to a minimum.

The cabinets themselves should generally be treated like any other furniture in your home in that you should clear up any spills as soon as you notice them.

Water damage is obviously one of the most common problems in kitchens, so you should make sure to regularly check for any leaks, especially after installation.

Be sure to pay special attention to often overlooked areas, such as the drainpipe under the sink and any other susceptible areas, such as dishwashers and food-preparation areas.

Excessive heat and steam can also cause damage to various components, such as warping in the case of wooden cabinets and melting electrical wire insulation.

While your installer should meet all the current building and safety regulations, it's ultimately up

to you to ensure you take care of your kitchen afterwards.

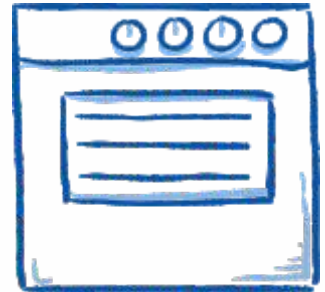


Most importantly, you should always have the extractor fan on during cooking and, if you don't have one, keep a window open.

Proper ventilation will prevent the room from becoming so steamed up that excessively high humidity levels start causing damp-related problems, which often occur in areas that aren't immediately visible.

Your kitchen installer should leave plenty of space for the oven, since the heat it generates can cause damage over time to any adjacent cabinets, particularly those that are made from cheaper materials like MDF.

Ideally, there should be at least eight inches of free space between the surfaces of the oven and those of the cabinets, doors and other fixtures.



2. Caring for your fibreboard cabinets

MDF (Medium Density Fibreboard) is one of the most common materials used for making kitchen cabinets, largely because it's so cost-effective. However, while the finishes tend to be quite durable, improper care can quickly lead to damage to the relatively fragile particle board beneath.

For routine care, you can simply clean the lacquered surfaces using warm water, a mild detergent and a microfibre cloth to prevent grazes and scratches to the surface.

You should, however, avoid using any abrasive chemicals, such as bleach.

While MDF cabinets should be well-protected by the exterior layer, it's essential to prevent any water getting beneath the surface.

To reduce the chances of this happening

- be sure to wipe up any spills immediately
- do not leave damp clothes hanging over things like doors

If the surface starts to peel in any area to the extent that it exposes the particle board underneath, you should have the cabinet repaired as soon as possible to prevent further damage.

3. Caring for natural wood cabinets

Natural wood products might be among the most expensive materials to use for kitchen cabinets, but they undoubtedly offer greater durability and, to many people, greater aesthetic appeal.

It's important to remember, however, that the colour and grain will never be completely consistent, but then that's exactly what gives natural wood its charm.

Natural occurrences, such as grain patterns and mineral deposits are nothing to worry about, and they're all part of the effect.

Certain finishing materials, such as paint, might mask these quite effectively, but you should only ever use paints or varnishes that are suitable for use in relatively humid and damp areas.

As far as routine care goes, much the same rules apply as they do for MDF or laminate.

- ✓ Simply use warm water, a mild detergent and a soft cloth
- ✗ Never use strong chemicals or waxes or polishes that aren't specifically designed for that purpose

You'll also want to clear spills quickly, and pay special attention to the area around the sink to ensure that the surfaces are always kept dry.

4. Caring for metal cabinets

Metal is the material of choice in commercial kitchens, the obvious reason being that it is extremely durable and easy to clean.

While not as common in the home as other materials, metal is sometimes the preferred choice in very modern homes and for those seeking a tough and low-maintenance solution.

The most common metals used are stainless steel or aluminium, the former being the more durable of the two, since it's less susceptible to dents.

Using a standard all-purpose cleaner should be fine for cleaning any metal countertops or cabinets, but you should make sure to avoid things like

- scouring pads
- steel wool and
- any other products that might permanently scar the surface

5. Caring for Thermofoil cabinets

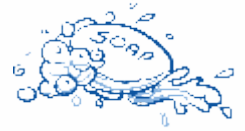
Thermofoil is a type of surface finish applied to the underlying engineered wood or MDF.

A type of polymer, thermofoil finishes are popular because they offer excellent durability. At the same time, thermofoil is particularly susceptible to heat- and moisture-related damage.

As such, heat-generating equipment, such as toasters and kettles, should be kept away from the surfaces, and you should ideally have heat shields installed in the area around the oven.

Your installer should be able to advise you on this, especially since it may be required by your warranty.

Routine care for thermofoil cabinets is quite straightforward, and mild soap and warm water should be enough to clean the surfaces. However, you should avoid any cleaning products that contain



- abrasive materials
- solvents or
- waxes

As usual, avoid using any harsh cloths, such as scouring pads or steel wool.

Finally, avoid exposing any thermofoil products to heat sources over 85°C, since doing so can warp or even melt the polymer covering.

6. Caring for glass cabinet doors

Glass easily collects visible dirt, particularly in the kitchen, but you need to take extra care when caring of glass cabinet doors.

The easiest way to clean glass is to use a squeegee and work from top to bottom using a microfiber cloth followed by paper towel to remove any excess moisture afterwards.

An ammonia-free glass cleaner can help to give the surface that extra shine.

7. Caring for laminated countertops

These durable, manmade countertops typically consist of a strong particle board surrounded by a protective layer of laminate.

Routine care is simply a matter of using soap, water and a microfiber cloth and, as usual, cleaning up any spills as soon as you notice them.

More stubborn stains can usually be dealt with by using a specialised household cleaner and a soft brush, but you should be particularly careful to avoid using anything that might scratch or otherwise damage the surface.

Finally, it's also essential that you seal all mitre joints in the countertops once per year using silicone sealant and a sealant gun, since doing so will help to protect the surfaces from water damage.

8. Caring for quartz, granite or marble

Quartz, granite and marble are entirely natural products and, as such, always have their own unique characteristics, such as natural pitting and mineral deposits.

Aside from presenting the epitome of luxury in a kitchen, these natural stone and mineral countertops are also extremely durable and, as such, require very little maintenance.

Any joints in the countertop will also be completely waterproof, since they'll be sealed using a specialised epoxy.

While routine cleaning of natural stone countertops is straightforward, it is important to avoid using particularly strong chemicals for cleaning or placing very hot items onto the surface, since doing so can cause discolouration.

It's also important to seal porous surfaces, such as granite, to help prevent discolouration from occurring due to standing liquids. However, countertops made from quartz never require sealing, since they are completely non-porous.

9. Caring for fittings

With most modern kitchens, you can easily adjust the hinges on each of the cabinet doors to fine-tune their positioning.

Any minor door-alignment problems can normally be taken care of simply by loosening the screw on the appropriate hinge using a Phillips screwdriver, holding the cabinet door in the optimal place and tightening the screw again.

Some cabinet doors also feature soft-close hinges, which can be adjusted to alter the speed of closing.

Finally, many new kitchen sets come with touch-up kits to take care of any minor damage that occurs during or after installation.

If you find you need more of these materials, your supplier should be able to provide them.

And finally...

A kitchen that's kept clean and tidy not only looks much better; it will also last much longer.

By promptly dealing with any spills or greasy stains, there'll be a greatly reduced chance of water seeping into things like wooden cabinets and causing swelling, cracking or mould.

Caring for your new kitchen is something you should start doing right after installation – it doesn't take much work if you get into a regular cleaning and maintenance habit, and it will save you a lot of money in the longer term.

For tips on how to care for your home improvement
or protect your home, why not check out:

www.homepro.com