

# Spring Clean Your Way to a Safer Kitchen

As the green grass begins to pop up outdoors, we often feel energized to do some projects. After a long winter, tackling a “spring cleaning” of our refrigerator and kitchen cupboards might be a good place to start.



## 1 Check out the foods in your refrigerator.

Could some of the foods become your dinner? If any of the foods are moldy or well past their “use by” date, toss them!

- Check out the “Pinchin’ Pennies in the Kitchen” series at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodwise/smart-shopping](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/foodwise/smart-shopping) to learn how to make soup, casseroles, omelets and other foods with the leftovers in your kitchen.

## 2 Sort the foods in your cupboards.

Are your cupboards arranged in “first-in, first-out” order? Are similar items (tomatoes, canned fruit) grouped together? Do you write the date of purchase on the foods you buy?

- Check out the new “What’s in Your Home Food Pantry?” handout (available at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn1706.pdf](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn1706.pdf)) for some ideas for foods to keep on hand.

## 3 Try these kitchen cleaning tips.

Harmful bacteria such as salmonella, staphylococcus, E. coli and listeria can lurk in our kitchens. Try these tips from the national Fight BAC campaign:

- **Clean surfaces.** Wash countertops and cutting boards with hot, soapy water, then sanitize them. You can use a commercial disinfecting kitchen cleaner or make your own “sanitizer” with 1 teaspoon of chlorine bleach per quart of water. Put the bleach mixture in a spray bottle or wipe it on with a clean rag. Finally, blot dry with a clean paper towel or allow to air-dry.
- **Disinfect dishcloths.** Bacteria love to grow on dishcloths because they often are moist and provide some “food.” Replace daily. Use the hot-water cycle of the washing machine and dry them in the dryer.
- **Clean your refrigerator.** Wash the refrigerator surfaces with hot, soapy water and rinse with a damp cloth. Do not use a chlorine-based sanitizer in your refrigerator because it can damage seals, gaskets and linings.
- **Disinfect your veggie-cleaning brushes.** Wash them with hot, soapy water, then rinse and place in the top rack of the dishwasher. Run the brushes through on a sanitizing cycle with the rest of your dishes, or soak in a bleach mixture (see above).

This program is funded in part by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. SNAP provides nutrition assistance to people with low income. It can help you buy nutritious foods for a better diet. To find out more contact your county Social Services office or call 1-800-755-2716.

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# Some of my friends are talking about gardening. I would like to try gardening with my kids, but I don't know where to begin. Can you help?

Gardening has many benefits. It provides healthful food and exercise for the family, plus kids who help grow vegetables are more likely to eat them.

When beginning a gardening project, consider the space and time you have available.

Do you have a flower bed that could become a "vegetable bed"? Lettuce and radishes grow fairly quickly. String beans also pop up quickly and are fun for kids to harvest.

If you do not have a garden plot nearby, you could try growing vegetables in containers. Some cherry tomatoes and bell pepper plants growing in a large flower pot can be fun for your children to tend throughout the summer.

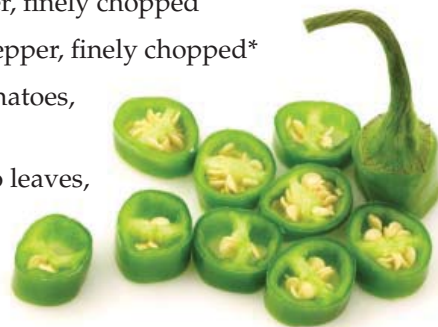
In North Dakota, most plants are best planted in May. The NDSU Extension Service has many resources at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/horticulture](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/horticulture) to help you learn how to grow your own food. To learn about square foot gardening and container gardening, see "Gardening Delights for All," at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/plantsci/hortcrop/h1600.pdf](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/plantsci/hortcrop/h1600.pdf). Visit with your Extension agent/assistant to learn about classes, handouts, and helpful videos and websites.



See "From the Garden to the Table: Salsa!" to learn how to grow the ingredients for fresh salsa. It is available at [www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn584.pdf](http://www.ag.ndsu.edu/pubs/yf/foods/fn584.pdf) or you can visit with your local NDSU Extension Service agent/assistant to learn more.

## Fresh Salsa

- 1 to 2 garlic cloves, finely chopped
- ½ c. onion, finely chopped (about ½ medium onion)
- ½ large green bell pepper, finely chopped
- ½ to 1 whole jalapeno pepper, finely chopped\*
- 4 large Roma (paste) tomatoes, chopped
- 1 small bunch of cilantro leaves, finely chopped
- 1 Tbsp. lemon or lime juice (freshly squeezed)



Mix ingredients together and serve. Store covered in the refrigerator and use within a few days. Serve with whole-grain crackers or baked chips.

**\*Note:** Be cautious when handling jalapeno peppers. Wear plastic gloves if possible and wash your hands thoroughly. The "heat" is in the seeds and veins.

**This salsa recipe is not suitable for canning.**

*Makes four servings. Each serving has 35 calories, 0 grams (g) of fat, 8 g carbohydrate, 2 g protein, 2 g fiber and 25 percent of the daily value for vitamin A and 70 percent of the daily value for vitamin C.*

## FoodWi\$e Tip of the Month

Save money: Shop your refrigerator first.

Cook or eat the food you already have at home before buying more.

Try making soup using leftover chicken or ham and vegetables.

Leigh Gunkel, Griggs and Steele counties

Julie Garden-Robinson, Food and Nutrition Specialist



Did you know SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) can help people grow their own food? SNAP participants can use their benefits to buy seeds and edible plants at SNAP retailers. For every dollar spent on seeds, home gardeners can grow an average of \$25 worth of produce.

## Just for Fun

Why are people tired in April?  
Because they just finished a long, 31-day March!

Contact the local office of the  
NDSU Extension Service  
for more information  
on food and nutrition or  
managing your food dollar.

