

SPRING CLEANING

• Get your home in order!

Spring fever anyone? There must be a few of you out there, besides myself! I am so ready for the rain to stop and for the sun to shine. I grew up in Michigan, where there has been snow in April on more than one occasion. Now, our beautiful Folsom weather has spoiled me rotten and I start hoping for 70 and 80-degree weather, often as early as February and March!

Those first warm, sunny days motivate me to get the house in order, both inside and out. I'm an avid gardener for one month a year and then it all goes to pot again. Springtime is also the time for ... yep, you guessed it ... spring-cleaning! I've been wondering why it's "spring" cleaning and not "fall" or "winter" cleaning. I have two guesses. First - I think the appearance of the long-lost sunshine motivates us to get some of those long overdue chores done. And, secondly, springtime is our last big chance to get the house in tip-top shape, so we can spend our summers outside enjoying ourselves, not cleaning and sweating inside while our families lounge by the pool.

Any form of cleaning, but particularly the all-encompassing "spring-cleaning," can be a huge, overwhelming task. A good way to get started is to first take inventory of your cleaning products. The key to saving time and frustration is to start with everything you need to complete the job. Next, make a list. A list will help keep you focused on what needs to be done. Cut out the ready-to-use checklist we've provided (organized by room). Clean one room at a time and you will feel a sense of accomplishment. It will also keep you motivated.

O.K., now that you're ready to get started, let's make this experience as enjoyable as possible! Try the following to put a skip into your step and get those cleaning juices flowing. Yes, it may actually be possible to enjoy cleaning.

Turn on your favorite music. Before you know it, your adrenaline will start pumping and you'll be dancing your way through the house.

Turn off the TV and the phone! The quickest cleaning is accomplished without any distractions.

Open the windows to air the house out with those fresh spring breezes.

Wear comfortable, old clothes that you won't mind getting stained or dirty.

Make light, energy-packed snacks and keep water, or another hydrating drink, handy. Cleaning is hard work and you'll need to keep your body going.

Enlist the help of your kids to help with smaller tasks, or their own bedrooms.

Call a professional cleaning service to help with the overall cleaning while you focus on organizing.

DON'T set yourself up for failure by expecting to complete your cleaning in one day. Remember, this is a deeper, more thorough cleaning than the every day cleaning tasks. Each room can easily take two or three hours to get through. Cleaning two or three rooms each day is a reasonable estimate for one person working at an average pace with breaks. Therefore, depending on the size of your home and the number of people involved, the entire task may take between two to four days. It is probably best to break up the cleaning into two weekends, so you don't burn out and end up with only half of your house clean! Try to make it fun, and remember - a clean house is a happy house! Did we mention that cleaning burns a lot of calories? So treat yourself to something extra yummy as your reward for all your hard work! ❶

— Elizabeth Morabito

✓ SPRING CLEANING CHECKLIST

Entire House: Clean walls, ceilings, and floors. Clean light fixtures, ceiling fans and chandeliers. Dust furniture. Move and clean under heavy furniture. Shampoo carpet, rugs, and upholstery. Clean lampshades. Wash blinds, mini-blinds, and shades. Clean baseboards. Dry clean or wash curtains and drapes. Replace/wash filters on air conditioning and furnaces. Check and replace smoke detector batteries. Sterilize all phones. Polish wood floors, cabinets and furniture. Wash windows and clean screens. **Office:** Vacuum books. Organize files, photographs, videos, and CDs. Shred unneeded documents. **Bedroom:** Strip the beds and wash blankets, comforters, quilts. Rotate mattresses. Remove out-of-season clothing from closet, wash and store, and replace with seasonal clothing. Donate or sell clothing that will not be worn again. **Kitchen:** Organize pantry by first pulling out all items and discarding unneeded or expired products. Move and clean under the refrigerator, as well as inside. Defrost freezer. Vacuum stove vents and refrigerator coils. Clean all smaller appliances, such as toaster and microwave. Clean tile and grout. Clean drip pans under stove burners. Polish silver and brass. Dust or wash all dishes, crystal, china, pots and pans. **Laundry Room:** Clean dryer vent. Move and clean under the washer and dryer. **Bathroom:** Clean shower and bath stalls, including grout. Clean shower curtains.