

# Holiday Party Cleaning Tips

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**Ah the joys and wonders of the Holiday Season** -- The brightly decorated homes, warm spiced cider by an inviting fireplace, traditional family festivities, guests coming for the Yuletide party. Wait a minute did someone say guests and party in the same sentence? Oh my, it's getting late and nothing has been done yet about party planning let alone cleaning or preparing for family for the traditional gathering of the clan.

All the preparation and cleaning must have been the scary things Scrooge dreamt at night. It may be late but Santa does not have sole rights to helpers nor is Rudolph the only one in town with a bright shiny light. Here are a few holiday guidelines to ensure Scrooge gets a sound night's sleep while you borrow Santa's helpers who happen to have hidden flashlights.

**Take Note:** Keep a pad handy to write down the extra items you'll need for a party or Christmas dinner. A second pad keeps a running tab of your "to do" list as they come to mind at three AM. Keep an extra pad in the car as well.

Weeks before your party, enter each room where people will linger and look around with the eye of Sherlock Holmes. Find a cubby hole for any unnecessary item until after the New Year. The less left out, the less that needs cleaning or can get broken. Remember the fastest way to declutter a room is never leave that room empty handed. Take something with you then put it away. Toss or take to Goodwill any item that passed its usefulness.

**Plan Ahead:** As you plan for your party or holiday dinner, write down things that your guests can help prepare when they arrive. These might include taking coats, opening wine bottles, mixing drinks, emptying trash, keeping nut dishes filled, arranging fruit, vegetable or cheese platters. Keep the list posted so when guests ask to help, it is easy to refer them to the list. Ask them to mark it off the list once they finish. No more last hour kitchen mayhem directing people on how they can help. Save this list on your computer for other parties as well.

- Carry a clean 1 1/2 inch paint brush in your back pocket while you are decorating your home for the holidays. It is within easy reach to whisk away cobwebs around lamps, door hinges or other area we all miss during our regular cleaning. Tuck a barely damp cloth into your other back pocket to wipe down baseboards as you move furniture making room for holiday decorations.
- Purchase additional plastic tablecloths if you have small children or pets coming for visits. Turn them soft side up and place a towel on top of the tablecloth on a bed or sofa where the pets or young children might sleep. The towel catches any accident while the plastic protects the bed, chair or couch. Then place the table cloth under the small fry during meal time to prevent carpet stains. Turn them into a place for children's activities either on a table or the floor to prevent stains, scratches and confine the toys.

### **Speed cleaning PhD:**

- Let the phone ring
- Put on some fast bouncy music
- Hold off that latte as a reward for getting the cleaning finished not for getting it started.

Ignore the advice you often read to do laundry etc as you clean -- what are they nuts? Your goal is to pick up speed while you are cleaning. Every time you stop what you are doing you lose that speed and it takes 10 minutes to get going again.

Tuck all your cleaners in a tote tray. Forget the cleaning aprons. They are trouble waiting to happen. Put clean rags in one plastic bag and carry a second for used rags. Then carry a trash bag to discard trash. Gather everything you need before you start. Remember don't stop- keep moving.

Turn your house cleaning into an aerobic exercise. Nearly everything, except vacuuming, is a matter of speed. Get both hands working - one moves objects as the other cleans. Move fast enough to get your heart rate up and put a sweat on your brow. You will love the time savings and your body will love you!

### **Tricks of the trade include:**

Quickly remove water ring marks in toilets with our Erase It for Bathrooms without scratching the bowl like a pumice stone. Then back the water out of the toilet and dry the bowl. Spray the bowl with our Advantage waterless car wash, wipe it to cover the entire bowl and go clean the shower. Wipe the toilet with a dry towel and allow the water to flow back in. Advantage contains polymers, which makes surfaces slick so "things" don't stick. Oh is post party cleanup a breeze. Then treat your Corian countertops with Advantage as well to add luster and help prevent stains.

Get rid of all leftovers in the refrigerator, clean the refrigerator tossing any bottle that has not been used for six months.

### **Preventive cures:**

If you burn candles, place them up high or in areas where people won't move them and never place them close to flammable objects or where a child or pet might knock them over. 100% soy candles are best to burn. They emit very little smoke and most do not contain lead wicks. A 16 oz soy candle will burn for 30 to 40 hours. If you light candles at a table or for a special ceremony, make certain the surface is well protected.

You might want to decorate window sills to prevent guests from placing glasses on the sills otherwise place three or four coasters and napkins on the sills as well as around all rooms that will be used.

Remove any antique or valuable furniture. Prevention is wise for any party.

Replace end tables with folding tray tables setting one or two extra in each room along with a decorative trash can.

Cover coffee tables first with plastic then a holiday table cloth followed by decorations and snacks if you serve them in that room. Never serve nuts that must be cracked open or snacks that have toothpicks. Both are deadly to carpet and require hours of extra cleaning labor.

It is permissible to ask guests to remove their shoes before entering your home especially if you live in a rainy or snowy area. One friend had everyone bring colorful Christmas socks to wear. It was a riot with everyone in their holiday dress.

Allow any mud to dry that does find its way onto your carpet then vacuum it.

### **Keep it handy:**

Our Ion-A-Clean, a patented, ionized water that is a remarkable stain remover. Most stains can merely be sprayed and left alone. Ion-A-Clean surrounds both the stain and the carpet fibers negatively charging both surfaces. The stain then releases from the carpet and an hour later or after guests leave is quickly blotted to remove the stain. It does not need to be rinsed. It works quite well on red wine stains without leaving the sticky residue that white wine or seltzer water leaves behind both of which are more difficult to remove than the red wine and damage carpet fibers.

Along with the Ion-A-Clean have several dry towels and damp towels ready to tackle those spills. Keep a few dry towels inside a cabinet front if possible in every room where guests will linger. The faster you attend to a stain the less damage the stain will cause.

Resist the temptation to serve colored punch drinks. If you do keep a spray bottle filled with a 50/50 solution of hydrogen peroxide to water. Immediately spray the spot with the solution. Wait 15 to 20 minutes then blot with a 50/50 solution of white vinegar to water.

Dampen a towel placing it and a mop just outside the garage door. A towel is much faster to use than any other mop to quickly remove spills from floors.

Keep a bottle of Bac-Out or Nature's Miracle found at pet stores, close at hand for spills on flooring with grout. Detergents cannot be used on any stone floor. The enzymes in either product "eat" bacteria and will not damage stone flooring.

A small cordless vacuum comes in quite handy and should be close at hand as well as a pair of pliers and a screw driver with all four heads tucked into the handle. Keep these and a pair of scissors in a kitchen drawer.

Copy motels and tuck one or two extra trash bag at the bottom of a trash container before placing the trash bag inside. This prevents rushing around finding replacements when the container needs emptying.

Mary Findley is a veteran cleaning expert and President of the Mary Moppins. Over the past several years, Mary has given multiple seminars and speeches to help people become more productive and proficient in their cleaning tasks. Her website - [www.goclean.com](http://www.goclean.com) <<http://www.goclean.com>> - also offers a wealth of cleaning tips and advice to help consumers make the most of their cleaning time. Mary's expertise and experience also lead her to create a line of cleaning products called the Mary Moppins Cleaning System that is steadily growing in popularity nationwide. Watch for her book "***The Complete Idiots Guide to Cleaning***" coming to her website and bookstores Jan, 2006.