

A clear glass spray bottle filled with white liquid, a colorful striped cloth, and star-shaped window decorations on a windowsill.

# **7 Non-Toxic Cleaning Recipes Made Easy**

**Heather Dessinger**

## 7 Non-Toxic Cleaning Recipes Made Easy

By Heather Dessinger of Mommypotamus.com Copyright 2016 Heather Dessinger

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Hi there. I'm Heather, the Mommypotamus. If you read my previous e-books, [DIY Organic Beauty Recipes](#) and [DIY Non-Toxic Cleaning Recipes](#), go ahead and skip to page 4. If you haven't, this is where you read a little about me, so here goes:

**I'm a mom.** I have three beautiful children whom I affectionately call the potami. The story of how we got our name can be found [here](#).

**I'm a researcher.** Questioning the status quo comes naturally to me, which is why I rely on evidence-based research to guide my decisions on food, natural remedies, birth and making my own cleaning and personal

care products.

**I'm a homesteader.** Well, sort of. My husband, Daniel, and I recently bought some land to pursue a dream of long-term sustainability. We're just getting started, but I've got my boots and a hat and more barn kitties than I can shake a stick at.

**I'm a DIYer.** Whether it's homemade laundry soap, lotion bars, or lip balm, I

can't help but tinker until I've got it figured out. What started out as a desperate attempt to replace store-bought products that made me feel bad became a passion.

And now that I make so many of the products our family uses, the obvious next step was to share my favorites with friends and family. I hope this e-book will inspire you to create a healthier home for yourself and for those you love .



## Powdered Dishwasher Detergent

If you've ever tried making homemade dishwasher detergent and been disappointed with the results, chances are you were closer to a great recipe than you thought! Most do-it-yourself formulas use the same basic ingredients, but there's a trick to getting them to work.

You see, cleansers like washing soda are considered a base, while buildup removers like citric acid are, well, an acid! While both of these components are essential to a good recipe, they neutralize each other if used at the same time. Many homemade recipes mix them together, when really they're best left separate.

Here's an analogy: Hot water is soothing and relaxing, while cold water is refreshing and invigorating. However, when you mix the two together you end up with tepid water and lose the benefits of both.

## What makes a good dishwasher detergent recipe?

Most commercial detergents use at least 50% washing soda in their formulas, with the remaining ingredients usually being water softeners and rinse aids. This works because they have access to ingredients like sodium silicate, a rinse aid that doesn't neutralize washing soda.

Because sodium silicate is not widely available, I recommend introducing your cleanser and rinse aid during different points of the wash cycle so they don't cancel each other out. This detergent recipe calls for pure washing soda as the primary cleansing agent, which should be followed by a rinse aid. I've included instructions for using a rinse aid in the next recipe. But before we get to that, you might be wondering:

## Really, just washing soda?

If this is what you're thinking, you're not alone. Other homemade recipes contain ingredients like borax, salt, and baking soda, which can make them seem more legitimate somehow. Truth be told, though, all three of these ingredients do the same thing as washing soda - raise pH and soften water - just less effectively.

The only exception is borax, which in addition to helping raise pH also combines with washing soda to create hydrogen peroxide. However, you can get the same effect - only stronger - simply by using a natural oxygen bleach in your formula. This can be helpful if you're still experiencing hard water deposits after using this detergent plus one or both of the rinse aids.

For instructions on adding oxygen bleach to your recipe, see the troubleshooting section on the next page.

## Dish Detergent Recipe

This is the recipe I use regularly because it's simple and - more importantly - it works.

### Ingredients

- 4 cups washing soda
- 15-30 drops grapefruit essential oil (optional)
- 5-10 drops lemon essential oil (optional)

### To Make

Combine ingredients and stir until there are no clumps. Pour into a jar, add clay pouch

if desired, and seal tightly with a lid.

## To Use

Use about 2 tablespoons per load. See instructions on the next page for information on using this formula with a homemade rinse aid.

## Troubleshooting

**My dishwasher detergent is clumping. Help!** - Add two tablespoons of bentonite clay in a pouch or small sock. This prevents the dishwasher detergent from clumping in high humidity areas. It's placed in a pouch because it's not meant to mix with the formula, just absorb excess moisture. However, it's very rarely necessary. I never use the clay in my home and I have no issues with clumping.

**I tried the dishwasher detergent and I'm still experiencing hard water deposits.**

**What do I do?** - Instead of 4 cups washing soda, use just 2 cups washing soda and add in 2 cups powdered oxygen bleach that contains no fillers. [Click here](#) for a link to the brand I buy.



## Citrus Shine Rinse Aid

Hard water deposits and sediment are no problem with this one ingredient solution.

Important Note: Before using the citrus shine rinse aid for the first time it's, important to clear away deposits from your dishwasher. Otherwise, the citric acid will loosen them and they will redeposit on your dishes.

To prepare your dishwasher, place 1/4- 1/2 cup citric acid in the bottom of your empty dishwasher and start a cycle. Allow to run for 3-5 minutes and then turn the dishwasher off. Let the water/citric acid solution soak for 3-4 hours and then allow the cycle to resume.

## Rinse Aid Recipe

### Ingredients

2 cups citric acid



## Liquid Rinse Aid

Do-it-yourselfers have been raving about the sparkling results they get from straight vinegar for years, but is it safe for the dishwasher? According to some manufacturers and industry experts, commercial rinse aids may be substituted with vinegar as long as it's no more than 5% acetic acid, which is exactly the ratio you'll find with most commercially sold vinegar. ([source 1](#), [source 2](#))

However, some newer dishwashers have rubber in the rinse aid compartment, which may be damaged by straight vinegar. Check with your manufacturer for information on whether it is recommended for your particular model.

If straight vinegar is not an option, there are a few natural rinse aids you can purchase which use citric acid and vinegar along with coconut derived clarifiers to reduce the acidity of the formula. [You can find a link to the one I recommend here.](#)

Estimated Cost Savings Analysis - Store-bought liquid rinse aids cost an average of \$0.41 per ounce. Plain white vinegar costs about \$0.05 per ounce. That makes the total store bought cost about \$3.49 for 8.45 ounces and the total homemade cost about \$0.42 for 8.45 ounces.

## Rinse Aid Recipe

### Ingredients

- White vinegar

### To Use

Fill liquid rinse dispenser with vinegar. Replace as needed.

### Storage

No special storage instructions.




15-20 drops citrus essential oil (optional)

## To Make

Combine citric acid and essential oils and stir until there are no clumps. Pour into a jar, add clay pouch if desired, and seal tightly with a lid.

## To Use

 If your dishwasher has a pre-rinse and main wash receptacle but not a rinse receptacle, place 1 tablespoon rinse aid in the main wash receptacle and place your detergent in the pre-wash receptacle. This ensures that the Citrus Shine Rinse Aid does not interfere with the cleaning power of your detergent, but instead activates after your dishes are clean to remove sediment/ hard water deposits.

If deposits remain, increase the amount used to 2 tablespoons and/or add the liquid rinse aid if recommended by your manufacturer.

## Storage

Store in a dry place. If you notice issues with clumping, add tablespoons of bentonite clay in a pouch or small sock to absorb excess moisture.



## Powdered Laundry Detergent

I've done my share of lumpy laundry. Newborn clothes with the tags and hangers still on? Check. "Gifts" from my helpers, including a Trojan poop diaper in my whites? Oh yeah. As you can imagine, I've been more than happy just to be able to keep clean underoos in the house at all times for the past few years. Buying "eco-friendly" laundry detergent seemed like a pretty good option until I re-read my favorite brands label a little closer. Undisclosed proprietary ingredients? No thanks!

After a lot of research I created this simple recipe. It's gotten a lot of rave reviews, like this one from Hilary:

"My husband does mechanical work for a logging company and his clothes get REALLY dirty after crawling in, on, and under those greasy machines! I think the detergent cleaned it better than our natural detergent we were buying from Costco! I was very impressed, thank you!"

And this one from Carolyn:

“Thank you so much for this go-to recipe!!! I use it all the time for our laundry”

Are you ready to get started? Here are a few things you should know first:



## Laundry Detergent: What You Really Need

**Bar Soap (ALWAYS)** – Most commercial soaps are “superfatted” for skin, which means that manufacturers add extra oil to each bar so that it is not overly drying. Because the point of washing clothes is to remove dirt and oil rather than add it, soap specifically made for laundry is recommended. Coconut oil soap is an amazing cleanser, which makes it my top choice for homemade detergent. [Click here to find out how to make it with only three ingredients.](#)

Commercial brands such as Fels Naptha or ZOTE fit that description, but some individuals may not be 100% comfortable with the ingredients used. Other options - which are not made for laundry but have been used with great success by many do-it-yourselfers - are Dr. Bronner's bar soap and Kirk's castile soap. I personally use Dr. Bronner's when I don't have a batch of my homemade coconut oil soap available.

**Washing Soda (DEFINITELY)** – Washing soda is a better water softener than salt and other ingredients, plus it allows for a higher cleaning pH than baking soda and borax. In short, washing soda is the key to getting laundry ultra clean.

**Baking Soda (NOPE)** - No one uses this in commercial formulas . . . not even Arm & Hammer! According to Daisy of Little House In The Suburbs, "Baking soda is only half as strong as washing soda at softening water and doesn't allow the cleaning pH to go nearly as high. And if you have a stronger product on hand, why dilute it with a weaker one?"([source](#)) Fortunately, if you have some on hand you can use it to make washing soda. [Click here for a tutorial that will show you how.](#)

**Borax (NOPE)** - Washing soda and borax perform the same function, so you're not missing out on anything if you choose to avoid borax. The only exception to this is that when washing soda and borax combine they form a small amount of hydrogen peroxide (also known as oxygen bleach). You can get the same effect by using the oxygen bleach recipe on page 87.

**Lemon Essential Oil (OPTIONAL)** - Works well as a stain remover and de-greaser.

**Vinegar (YEP)** – It makes a wonderful fabric softener. You'll find a recipe and instructions for use on page 75.

**Powdered Oxygen Bleach (SOMETIMES)** - For brightening whites. Look for pure sodium percarbonate (powdered hydrogen peroxide) which is non-toxic.

## Powdered Laundry Detergent

If you're wondering where to find pure sodium percarbonate or any of the other

ingredients below, I've got you covered. [Click here for links to what I personally use.](#)

Ingredients {Washes 42 - 62 Loads}

- 6 cups washing soda
- Three bars of 4.5 - 5 ounce soap, finely grated (see section on soap above for recommendations)
- Lemon essential oil (optional)

## Equipment

Food processor (optional)

## To Make

1. Cut or grate soap into small chunks. Add to the food processor along with the washing soda. If you don't have a food processor you can finely grate the soap and mix it with the powder. It will require a little more attention to get the two ingredients evenly distributed, but it can easily be done. If you are not using a food processor skip to step three.

2. Blend until you have a fine powder. You may want to lay a dishtowel over the top of your food processor to prevent a fine mist of powder from floating into the air. Also, let it settle a bit before opening the container or the powder will float onto your kitchen counter!

3. Pour into a clean container (keep the essential oil next to the jar and add 5 drops with each load)

## To Make:

These instructions are for a top loader. I don't have any experience with front loaders, sorry!

1. Add 3-4 tablespoons laundry detergent per load ( If you are washing in cold

water, dissolve it in hot water before adding it in. I prefer to start each load with a little hot water to dissolve and then put my laundry in)

2. If desired, add about five drops of lemon essential oil as a degreaser.
3. If washing whites, add a scoop of powdered oxygen bleach or pour 1/2 cup peroxide in the bleach compartment
4. Add 1/2 cup vinegar to a Downy ball.
5. For extra fabric softening goodness and a shorter drying time, toss some felted wool dryer balls in the dryer with your clothes.

### **Is this HE safe?**

This soap is low-sudsing, so theoretically it should be fine for HE washers. A very similar recipe found on the Kirk's Castile Soap website is said to be safe and offers the following information and tips:

“This powered recipe is great for High Efficiency washers because it is very low sudsing.

It is important that you grate the bar soap very finely for HE washers.” ([source](#))

### **Special notes:**

As with other detergents, it is recommended that you cut the amount used in half for HE machines.

Be sure to check your owner's manual – using certain types of products may void your warranty.

### **Is this septic system safe?**

Yes, all of the ingredients in this recipe are considered septic system safe.



## Glass Cleaner

This is an easy, inexpensive recipe that delivers streak-free results. Compare it to your store-bought brand and you may be surprised to find this one works better!

Store-bought glass cleaner costs an average of \$0.13 per ounce. Here's the breakdown for this recipe:

- Water – Cost varies, but roughly \$0.01 for the total recipe
- Vinegar – About \$0.05 per ounce
- Rubbing alcohol– About \$0.12 per ounce
- Cornstarch – About \$0.04 for the total recipe

Total store bought cost – About \$3.43 for 26 ounces

Total homemade cost – About \$0.64 for 26 ounces Ingredients

# Glass Cleaner Recipe

- 1/2 cup white vinegar
- 1/3 cup rubbing alcohol
- 1 tablespoon cornstarch or arrowroot powder
- 1 3/4 cup water

## To Make

Pour all ingredients into a spray bottle and shake to mix.

## To Use

Shake before using.

## Storage

No special storage instructions.



## Soft Scrub

In my house, bathtime is a success when my toddler gets wetter than I do, I get to count wiping up after the splashfest as mopping, and there's a ring around the tub because the kids had good clean fun. And by clean, I mean they went outside and got dirty.

Well, that's not exactly true. I'm happy that my older kids love to play outside in all kinds of weather, but I'm also REALLY HAPPY to see that tub ring go, too. A sprinkle of straight baking soda and elbow grease just doesn't cut it, but this grapefruit soft scrub totally does the trick.

It's gentle, but it deep cleans and restores shine just like store brands. And not only does it wipe away grime, it doubles as a deodorant. Okay, that's not true either, but I did accidentally apply it last week while rushing out the door. Label your DIY supplies folks, that's my PSA for the day.

## Soft Scrub Recipe

For use on ceramic surfaces, sinks and countertops (except granite).

## Ingredients

- 2 tablespoons castile soap
- 3/4 cup baking soda
- Just enough water to make a smooth, liquid paste (about 2-3 tablespoons)
- 10 drops grapefruit essential oil (or oil of choice)

## Equipment

Empty dish soap, ketchup or shampoo bottles make a great “squirt top” container for this scrub.

## Instructions

Combine baking soda, castile soap and essential oils. Add just enough water to make a smooth liquid paste, then transfer mixture to your chosen container.

## To Use

Squirt a small amount on a damp sponge and massage into surface. Add more as needed. Rinse well with warm water.

## To Store

Can be stored at room temperature for up to a year.



## Lemon & Lavender All-Purpose Cleaner

Mood lifting, stress-busting essential oils are the superstars of this formula, but the cheap- yet-effective white vinegar is a close second.

Contrary to it's humble reputation, vinegar has been found to be effective against a variety of bacteria, viruses and mold. ([source 1](#), [source 2](#)) This recipe will make one 16 ounce bottle or two 8 ounce bottles of spray cleaner.

## All-Purpose Cleaner Recipe

### Ingredients

- 1 cup vinegar
- 1 cup distilled water
- 30 drops lemon essential oil
- 10 drops lavender essential oil

## **To Make**

Add essential oils and vinegar to a glass spray bottle and shake well. Add water and shake again.

## **To Use**

Shake before using, then spray on surface and wipe clean with a soft cloth.

## **Packaging Suggestions**

Dark amber or cobalt blue glass spray bottles are ideal because they filter out UV light, which can damage essential oils. [Click here for links to the spray bottles, labels and label templates recommended for this project.](#)