



## Sanitize countertops and cutting boards

### Should I use a sanitizer to clean counter tops and cutting boards, or does hot water and soap do the job?

Although a soap and hot water combination cleans reasonably well, it may not eliminate all bacteria. Using some type of sanitizer is recommended. That way, you're making sure that surfaces that look clean actually are clean.

According to the Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Nutrition (CFSAN), bleach or commercial cleaners designed for kitchens are the best sanitizers, as long as they're used properly. For example, if you use bleach or a sanitizer that comes as a concentrate, be sure to follow product directions when you dilute it. Check the label. For bleach, a teaspoon per quart of water should do the trick.

Cutting boards are especially important to keep clean. CFSAN offers these recommendations:

- The easiest types of cutting board to keep clean are smooth cutting boards free of cracks or crevices made of hard maple, plastic or other non-porous material. Avoid cutting boards made of soft, porous materials.

- When you wash cutting boards, use hot water, soap, and a scrub brush to remove food particles. Then sanitize the board with a commercial sanitizer or bleach solution, or by washing the cutting board in the dishwasher.

- Always, always, always wash and sanitize cutting boards after using them for raw foods that you plan to cook — especially raw meat or fish —

and before using them for ready-to-eat foods. You might consider keeping two cutting boards on your counter — one only for foods that will be cooked and the other for ready-to-eat foods, such as bread, cooked meats, and fresh fruit and vegetables.

To the point, an Ohio State University study published recently in the *Journal of Food Protection* examined 10 commercial sanitizers on polyethylene material commonly used for plastic cutting boards. Most were ammonia-based cleaners, although chlorine (as sodium hypochlorite) was the active ingredient in one, and lactic acid was the active ingredient in another. This study looked specifically at the products' efficacy against a bacterium called *Listeria monocytogenes*.

The researchers found that all of the products were effective when used according to manufacturers' directions. Those that required a longer surface time (some as long as 10 minutes) weren't necessarily better at killing the bacteria than those that required less exposure time.

Another finding was that *Listeria monocytogenes* can survive on cutting board surfaces that were not sanitized for up to six days. If left on a surface too long, this particular bacterium can form a biofilm that makes it harder to kill. Ideally, surfaces such as cutting boards should be sanitized immediately after being used.

*Chow Line* is a service of Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH, 43210-1044, or [filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@cfaes.osu.edu).



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