

## **Cleaning Products 101**

As you walk down the aisles of your grocery store, you may have a hard time imagining that people once cared for their floors, windows, and clothes without the aid of commercial products. They made soap from tallow and ashes, and cleaners from lemon juice, borax, vinegar, and baking soda. Before the advent of the myriad products we take for granted today, a homemaker had to have a basic understanding of the chemistry of cleaning in order to keep a tidy house. She would have been familiar with the bleaching properties of lemon juice, the disinfecting power of vinegar, and the grease-cutting abilities of baking soda. She would have known that a tablecloth stained with blueberries would require very different treatment than one marred by gravy. Homekeeping generations ago was as much a science as an art.

Because of the convenience offered by many new products, much of that knowledge has faded. But it's just as important today as it was a century ago to understand how cleaning products work. Because there are so many products to choose from, cupboards can quickly become cluttered, and confusion about which products to use can abound. A little knowledge about ingredients and their individual properties can help remedy that. Armed with a few facts, you can confidently choose the cleansers, polishes, and detergents that will allow you to clean more effectively and efficiently.

**Martha Stewart's Homekeeping Handbook by Martha Stewart (2006)**