

Fab DAILY

HOMES & FAMILIES



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IT'S a chore we all have to do, but the average Brit spends around ten days a year cleaning their home. But cleaning influencer Ann Russell, *inset*, says we're all wasting time and money by doing things wrong. She tells **NATASHA HARDING** what you shouldn't do when it comes to housework...



10

WAYS YOU'RE CLEANING YOUR HOUSE ALL WRONG

- DON'T VACUUM THE STAIRS:** It's often quicker to use a dustpan and brush to sweep your stairs than to use the vacuum – and it saves on electricity. Wear rubber gloves to pull hair and dust free from the carpet before using a rubber-bristled hand brush to remove any other bits of dirt. Don't forget to work from top to bottom.
- DON'T WIPE TOO SOON:** Since the advent of Covid, more and more cleaners are advertised as "virucides", meaning they can kill viruses. And the most important thing to remember about any of these products is that they all have a minimum contact time that they need to work. The small print will tell you how long the liquid must be left on a surface to achieve the results advertised.
- DON'T USE FABRIC SOFTENER ON TOWELS:** While the idea of soft towels may seem appealing, if you use fabric conditioner on towels or cleaning cloths it significantly reduces absorbency. So instead of your towel getting you dry, it just shunts water around. To soften towels and remove soap residue, put a large mugful of white vinegar in the machine's drum during the rinse cycle.
- WHEN WASHING UP:** Washing up water needs to be as hot as you can handle to ensure detergent is efficient, meaning less has to be used. I always know when someone has washed up in warm water – instead of hot water – because everything has a film of grease on it. Hot water also evaporates much more quickly, meaning you hardly need to touch your pots with the tea towel before you put them away.
- DON'T USE SPRAY POLISH:** Spray polishes are expensive and you can make something just as good at home. I prefer to use hard wax polish once a year and buff furniture with a spritz of white vinegar in between. The acid acts as a mild antibacterial agent.
- DON'T TRY UNFOUNDED HACKS:** Cleaning influencers like Mrs Hinch have some great tips but you should never use cleaning products for things they weren't intended for. For example, fabric conditioner should never be smeared on walls or skirting boards, it's flammable for a start – and won't do the job.
- DON'T WASH CLOTHES BEFORE REMOVING STAINS:** Before you wash clothes that are particularly soiled, use a pretreatment spray such as BioTex. It's invaluable and saves rewashing so many things.
- DON'T BUY SINK UNBLOCKER:** Soda crystals are great as a weekly drain treatment. Just chuck a mugful into your sink and follow with a kettleful of boiling water once a week to keep blockages at bay.
- DON'T BUY EXPENSIVE CLOTHS:** There are many jobs where microfibre cloths are great, but they can be fairly poor performers for others. I use cotton cloths in the kitchen as they are cheap and can be washed easily. Disposable cloths that come on a roll or in packets of ten or more are handy for light jobs like wiping up spillages – and you can wash them several times.
- DON'T CLEAN THE FLOOR FIRST:** Always clean a room from top to bottom, otherwise you're creating extra work for yourself. When you dust and clean the sides and soft furnishings in a room, that mess will end up on the floor, so if you Hoover first you'll end up doing it again.



Edited extract from *How to Clean Everything* by Ann Russell (Headline Home, £12.99, out now). TIPS... book

Tu & Me & him & her



Cardigan £25



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Subject to availability. Selected stores only.



YOU NEED TO FIX THIS, LADIES



PROBLEM SORTED... Pascal and Sam

From previous page

THEY say you can't choose your family – but what they don't mention is that you don't get to choose your in-laws either. When us ladies say "I do", we are in fact agreeing to take on a whole new unknown family package too, whatever that looks like. I've had decades of experience dealing with mothers-in-laws and, as Victoria and Nicola may be finding out now, it is hard work. I'm on my second marriage and had very different experiences with each mother-in-law. I got along with the first without a hiccup. My ex was an only child and I was immediately taken under her wing. She made sure I fitted into her home and life like the daughter she'd never had. I loved her. We had so much in common and, crucially, we didn't compete for my husband's attention. Once a month we'd all get together and it meant my mother-in-law got to spend quality time with her only child and their relationship thrived as a result. We women were the glue holding the family together – and boy did we make it work. When it was clear our marriage wasn't working out after five years together, it wasn't my husband I feared telling but my mother-in-law, and I absolutely dreaded breaking her heart. We didn't speak again. After having a pitch-perfect relationship my first time around, my relationship with my second mother-in-law proved a lot trickier. I married Pascal, 61, a carpenter from France in 2008 and I learnt quickly that French women dominate family life. Our situation

By **SAMANTHA BRICK**

perhaps made Victoria's and Nicole's seem tame but I hold my hands up, the ins and outs sound trivial now that the years have passed. As Pascal's third wife, I'd often get called one of my husband's exes' names, which was hurtful, not to mention rude. I still don't know if it was intentional. She also didn't like me speaking English in front of her, which was upsetting. Any man worth marrying would hate seeing his wife unhappy and logically he's going to side with the person he cuddles up to first thing in the morning and last thing at night. And that's what Pascal did. He "had my back" and didn't see his parents either. It took three years for us all to kiss and make up but now I finally see her for who she is – a formidable woman who has raised four kids. I confess I haven't been the perfect daughter in law. I'd make a song and dance about having to remove my shoes in her home. In the past she has been gracious and let me keep them on but now I'm mature enough in our relationship to take a pair of slippers along with me. I'm vegetarian and without being asked she will always cook a separate meal for me when there are a dozen of us around her table. Do I thank her? Probably not often enough. My message to Nicole and Victoria is this – put your big girl pants on and fix this because, as the saying goes, the days are long but the years are short.

FabFood

With Fabulous Food Editor **KIRSTY SPENCE**



THERE'S a real chill in the air and winter bugs are doing the rounds. So at this time of year I like to ramp up the spice. This week, I've chosen two recipes to really tickle your tastebuds. Bestselling cookbook author Annabel Karmel likes to keep things simple in the kitchen, so if the idea of cooking with spices scares you, this is a great place to start. Plus, you won't need to splash out on exotic ingredients to make her lamb or sweet potato and lentil curry. In fact, you've probably got most of them in your kitchen cupboard. This sweet potato and lentil curry is a great option if you're trying to cut down on your meat intake, and is full of fantastic textures. I love the mango and coconut garnish, it will have you dreaming of warmer climates from the first bite. I'll be batch-cooking these babies, and I hope you enjoy them just as much as I do.

Sweet potato & lentil curry

Serves 6
Prep time: 5 mins
Cooking time: 35 mins
Cals: 508. Sat fat: 21g
YOU NEED:
250g sweet potato, peeled and diced
2 tsp sunflower oil
100g quinoa
2 onions, sliced
½ red chilli, deseeded and diced
1 tsp fresh ginger, peeled and grated
1 clove garlic, crushed
3 tsp korma curry paste
1 tsp curry powder
2 x 400ml tins coconut milk
1 ½ tbsp mango chutney
250g cooked puy lentils
70g kale
To garnish:
Lime, chilli, mint, spring onion, mango, coconut
METHOD: Preheat the oven to 220C/200C fan/gas mark 7. Put the sweet potato in a roasting tin, add 1 tsp oil, season and toss. Roast for 25 mins until golden and cooked through. Meanwhile, cook the quinoa in boiling water for



15 mins, drain then set aside. Heat the remaining oil in a saucepan. Add the onion, chilli and ginger. Fry for five minutes, add the garlic then the curry paste and powder and fry for 30 seconds. Pour in the coconut milk (saving some for serving) and add the mango chutney. Bring to the boil. Add the cooked quinoa, lentils and the kale, then simmer for five minutes. Stir in the cooked sweet potato, and season. Garnish and serve with naan.

Lamb curry

Serves 6
Prep time: 10 mins
Cooking time: 1hr 15 mins
Cals: 703. Sat fat: 7g
YOU NEED:
2 tsp olive oil
700g diced leg of lamb
2 onions, sliced
4 cloves garlic, crushed
½ red chilli, diced
3 tsp korma curry paste
1 tsp garam masala
2 tsp cumin seeds
1 cinnamon stick
400g chopped tomatoes
300ml lamb stock
2 tsp mango chutney
400g cooked green lentils, drained
2 tomatoes, sliced into six
70g baby spinach
To garnish:
Spring onion, natural yoghurt, coriander
METHOD: Preheat oven to 160C/140C fan/gas mark 3. On the hob heat the oil in a casserole dish, brown the lamb then set aside. In the same pan, fry the onion, garlic and chilli for two minutes. Add the curry paste and spices then return the lamb and coat in the mixture. Add the chopped tomatoes, stock and mango chutney, then bring to the boil. Cover and cook in the oven for an hour until the lamb is tender. Stir in the lentils, tomatoes and spinach. Serve with garnish and rice.

