

## Small changes can have a big impact on the environment

Families and friends love to gather in the kitchen. That's where we create delicious meals, chat about the day's events, grab a snack and tidy up before we call it a night. It's also one place where small changes can have a big impact on the environment and your wallet. This year, try incorporating some of these spring greening tips into your spring cleaning routine.

**When cleaning up after a meal, remember to keep the fats, oils and grease out of the drain to avoid clogs that could result in a costly visit from the plumber.**

- Locate an empty, heat-safe container, like a soup can. When the cooking oils have cooled, scrape these into your container, cover it securely, freeze it and throw the hardened oils away with the trash.
- Skip the garbage disposal and use a sink strainer to catch food scraps. Scrape your leftover food scraps into the trash or compost bin and wipe plates and cookware with an absorbent napkin or paper towel before washing by hand or loading into the dishwasher.
- Oil-based foods that should never go down the drain include lards/shortening, butter/margarine, dairy products, batter, icing, salad dressings and sauces.

**Keeping the kitchen clean is a constant battle. Arm yourself with the tools needed to get the job done without paying a fortune for harsh chemicals.**

- Baking soda and water will do the trick when it comes to cleaning your kitchen tile or countertops. Need a tougher abrasive? Sprinkle on kosher salt and scrub with a wet cloth or sponge.
- For stains, mildew or grease streaks, simply spray with lemon juice or vinegar, let it sit for a few minutes, then scrub with a brush.
- Save water and energy by only doing full loads in the dishwasher and washing machine. If you're in the market for new appliances, always look for the Energy Star and WaterSense labels.

**Cleaning out the pantry can be a daunting task; once you've cleaned it out, remember these tips when it's time to fill 'er up:**

- Buying in bulk minimizes excess packaging and it's cost-effective too. Whenever possible, try to find items packaged in recycled/recyclable containers.
- You can help support our community by buying fresh from local farmers right here in Hampton Roads whenever possible.
- Quit the bottled water habit. In addition to reducing your carbon footprint, replacing expensive bottled water with clean, safe, tap water is good for your wallet, too!