



SEEING RED
The best red-wine stain remover is in your medicine cabinet.

LIKE new

Out darn spot!

You love guests but hate the mess they leave behind. Here's our expert holiday-stain survival guide.



Staff member **PAT SLAVEN**, a chemical engineer with a master's degree in textile science and co-author of "How to Clean and Care for Practically Anything," tells you how to clean like a pro.

The party's over and everyone had a swell time, but now you're stuck with a tablecloth that's splotted with candle wax and stains. And—yikes!—someone spilled red wine on your carpet. Don't worry. Here's a plan to erase the nasty spots your guests leave behind. Use our guide below with the tearout sheet on page 84a. Also, check out pre-party speed-cleaning tricks from professional cleaning services. They're a cinch to do yourself—and they're free.

WINE: WENDELL WEBBER; PROP STYLING: JEFFSTYLES.COM

YOUR PRE-PARTY SPEED-CLEANING PLAN

Put your energy where it counts—the places that will be under guest scrutiny. We checked with professional cleaning services to find out what to zero in on.

■ **FOCUS ON THE ENTRY.** "Stand outside your front door as a guest and come in.

Then straighten, clean, or get rid of anything that shouldn't be there," says Barbara Fierman of New York's Little Elves.

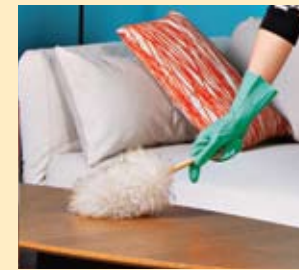
■ **QUICK-DUST TABLES.**

"Wipe down all the tabletops in the rooms your guests will be hanging out in," says Kristen Brogan of Maid to Perfection

Cleaning Services in Sonoma County, California. Or you can grab a dust rag in each hand, run around the house, and be done in 5 minutes, Fierman says.

■ **HAVE A COAT STRATEGY.** Don't throw them on a bed. Tidy a closet or buy or rent a coat rack and put it in a hall or bedroom.

■ **DE-CLUTTER THE KITCHEN.** Remove wrappers, newspapers, and other paper clutter. "No matter how neat the piles, it doesn't look good to leave them in sight," says Kristen Groves of Merry Maids in South Austin, Texas. And wipe down



DOUBLE UP Don't dust with one hand—use them both!

cabinets; you don't want guests to see fingerprints.

■ **MAKE THE BATHROOM SPARKLE.**

Focus on mirrors, toilets, and countertops. They should be spotless and clutter-free. Don't waste time tidying medicine cabinets or doing shower cleanups. "Guests

shouldn't pop their heads in there anyway," Brogan says.

■ **TAKE A WHIFF.** For lingering odors, Fierman puts a small cup of dry coffee grinds where the smell is—in the fridge, near the trash, or where the cat litter was. "It's better than baking soda," she says.

Spot-removing dos and don'ts

DO work a stain from the outside in. This keeps it from spreading.

DON'T remove red wine with white wine. It will just leave a nasty brown sugar stain!

DO test any stain remover in an inconspicuous spot first.

DON'T waste your seltzer water on stains. Unless your tap water is very hard, it works as well, and you won't waste money on seltzer.

DO be careful with salt. It can make stains worse. Besides, it's messy. Better to blot up spots with terry-cloth towels weighted down by heavy objects.

Stain busters Tips for tablecloths, upholstery, and carpets

STAIN	CANDLE WAX	BUTTER OR CHEESE	CRANBERRY SAUCE	EGGNOG	GRAVY	GREASY FOODS	RED WINE	WHITE WINE, CHAMPAGNE, GINGER ALE
Carpets	Scrape off excess. Blot with citrus solvent, like Goo Gone. If wax remains try detergent solution (1 teaspoon white or clear liquid dish detergent to 1 cup of warm water).	Scrape off excess. Blot with cleaning solvent, like Afta. If stain remains first try dish detergent, then ammonia, then white-vinegar solution. (See page 84a.)	Blot with detergent solution. (See page 84a). If any stain remains, dab with a color remover, like Tintex or RIT.	Blot with detergent solution and then water. If stain remains try white-vinegar solution, then a cleaning solvent. (See page 84a.)	Scrape off excess. Blot with cleaning solvent. If stain remains try, in this order: detergent, ammonia, and vinegar solution. (See page 84a.)	Blot with a cleaning solvent like Afta. If stain remains try the detergent solution. (See page 84a.)	Blot with water. If stain remains try detergent solution (see page 84a), then dab with 3 percent hydrogen peroxide to lift out the color.	Yes, they stain! Maybe not right away, but eventually they'll leave a brown spot when the sugars caramelize. Blot with water, then apply detergent solution. (See page 84a.)
Fabrics	For washables Pour boiling water through the fabric from a height of 12 inches over a bowl or sink. For nonwashables Sandwich the cloth between paper towels and press with a warm iron.	Use the same treatment, but don't iron or put the item in the dryer until the stain is gone or it will set. Old butter and cheese-sauce stains are tough to get out.	For washables Pretreat with a laundry booster, like Shout, then launder using color-safe bleach. For nonwashables Treat as you would carpet.	For washables Use an enzyme detergent. For nonwashables Treat as you would carpet.	For washables Apply a pasty mix of Fels-Naptha soap and water. Don't put in the dryer until stain is gone or it could set.	For washables Apply a pasty mix of Fels-Naptha soap and water. Don't put in the dryer until stain is gone or it could set.	For washables Pretreat with a laundry booster like Shout, then launder using color-safe bleach. For nonwashables Treat as you would carpet.	For washables Pretreat with laundry booster like Shout before washing. For nonwashables Treat as you would carpet.