



Maintaining the Home

Garbage Disposers Care and Cleaning

Maintaining the Home: Garbage Disposers Care and Cleaning

Use a strong flow of cold water and keep it running at least 30 seconds after the grinding noise has stopped to flush all food particles through the drain.

Always use cold water when operating the disposer to solidify fatty and greasy wastes so they will be chopped up and flushed down the drain.

Hot water will not hurt the disposer and you may safely run hot water from the sink through it. However, try to use cold water when you are operating the disposer.

If you wash dishes in a sink with a disposer, check to be sure all small objects are removed from the sudsy water before you drain the sink.

If you have a continuous-feed disposer, move silverware and other small items away from the edge of the sink counter to avoid accidentally knocking them in while it is running.

Do not put small bones through; they help to scour the sides of the grinding chamber.

Follow directions in the manual that comes with your disposer as to what should not be put through the disposer. Do not grind large bones or fibrous materials such as corn husks, unless otherwise specified in the manual. With fibrous foods (celery, chard, asparagus ends, etc.) put through only a small amount at a time with a full flow of water. If the drain line is long and quite horizontal, fibrous foods or too much garbage at one time can clog the line.

Do not put uncooked fat from meat into the disposer as it may cause it to clog. Do not pour liquid fats down the drain. Instead, allow fat to solidify in an empty tin can in the refrigerator and dispose.

Run the disposer each time you put food waste in it. This is particularly advisable in the less expensive models which are more subject to corrosion from the acids formed by food waste left for a long time.

An unusual noise while the disposer is operating may mean a foreign object. Turn off disposer immediately and retrieve the object.

With a continuous-feed model, use the cover as directed to protect yourself when grinding bones or fruit pits. Small particles could be ejected by the force of the disposer action. Avoid leaning over the disposer if you are feeding waste into it while it is running.

Never put your hand inside the disposer while it is running.

All disposers have overload protectors to avoid damage to the motor. If the disposer should stall, turn off the disposer and the cold water. Retrieve the article causing the problem. Press the reset button on the disposer. If it won't stay in, wait a few minutes and try again. If the disposer won't start when the switch is turned on, check the house fuse.

Cleaning Garbage Disposers

Garbage disposers clean themselves if used properly. Do not put lye or other chemical drain pipe cleaners into the disposer.

Periodically, and always after disposing of fibrous food wastes, purge the drainline by filling the sink with two or three inches of cold water. Turn on the food waste disposer and allow this water to run through with no waste added.

Before leaving your home for several days, check to be sure all waste has been flushed out of the disposer to avoid odors. If odors should occur through an oversight, they can be removed by running orange or lemon peels or ice cubes through the disposer.

This material was adapted from publications produced by Michigan State University. Michigan State publications can be found on the Web at <http://www.msue.msu.edu/msue/imp/mod02/master02.html>.

*This resource is one in a series on **Maintaining the Home** which include:*

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Selection and Use of Home Cleaning Products
Discovering the Secrets of Successful Storage

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Fireplace and Chimney Care

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Outdoor Water Conservation Tips

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