New Uses for Things You Already Have: Baking Soda

By: Gottin_Himmel

Storage space and money are usually at a premium , especially if you're working hard at building up your preps. Wouldn't it be a good thing if you didn't have to find a separate place to store your cleaning supplies so your flour didn't taste like scouring powder? Unless you prefer the taste ... .

I've collected some multi-use ideas for something you probably already have in your pantry - baking soda.

Household Uses

Baking soda works great for removing burnt-on food from pots and pans. If you're in a situation where you're cooking with alt energy, this might be more of an issue than you think. Let the pan cool down a bit, sprinkle with baking soda, a few grains of table salt and a couple of drops of water. Allow this paste to sit for half an hour, and then scrub away to your heart's content.

Of course, baking soda is a must-have for putting out grease fires.

Baking soda is great for neutralizing battery acid. Think you can find a use for this anywhere?

Baking soda and water together make a good deodorizer for food-storage containers, too. If you can't get the smell of pickles out of that five-gallon bucket you got from the local McDonald's, fill 'er up with warm water and baking soda (about a cup). Let this set for a few hours, empty it, and then rinse with plain water. If it still smells pickly (I made up that word), set the bucket out in the sun for a couple of hours to finish the job.

Need to scrub that grubby bathtub? Sprinkle a wet tub with baking soda, allow to sit for a few minutes, and then gently scrub with a damp cloth. This works even better if you moisten the towel with a little white vinegar.

Forgot to store some air freshener? Yikes! And you've been eating beans for five days in a row. Put a tablespoon of baking soda, a tablespoon of white vinegar, and a pint of water in a spray bottle. Let the moisture set until it's done fizzing. Spray as you would a room deodorizer. This stuff really works. The vinegar smell is gone in a few minutes, too.

If your cat's been eating beans five days in a row, too, mix some baking soda with the kitty litter.

Health and Beauty Aids

Let’s face it: in a fan situation, we’re all going to be doing a lot more physical work than we’re used to. Muscles are going to ache, skin is going to find poison ivy, and the bugs are gonna have us for lunch. Put a half cup or so of baking soda in a basin of warm water and soak your feet. Dissolve a cup of baking soda in a tub of water, along with a cup of salt; soak for 15 minutes and your aches will feel all kinds of better. Make another batch of this and sponge it on a poison-ivy rash. A paste of baking soda and water applied to bug bites and bee stings neutralizes the formic acid in the venom.

Most of you already know about dissolving a half teaspoon of baking soda in a glass of water for use as an antacid. This is probably all right once in a while, but if you have dietary sodium issues, you might want to use this remedy in moderation.

Baking soda is also an ingredient in most of the oral-rehydration mixtures already posted here on the Rubicon. Please refer to those articles for the exact proportions.

Forgot to stock enough toothpaste and deodorant? Uh-oh. Things could get smelly if you’re confined to your shelter for a few weeks with your loved ones, not to mention how the smell would scare away any four-footed critter you might be stalking for dinner. Brush your teeth with a mixture of baking soda and a few grains of salt. It’s mildly abrasive but won’t hurt the enamel on your teeth. For a deodorant substitute, sprinkle some baking soda and cornstarch into the palm of your hand and apply to your underarm area. You can dust this on with a spare (unused) face-powder brush if you have an extra one.

By the way, a couple of pinches of baking soda mixed with your usual shampoo will remove any buildup of styling products. This might not be vital in a fan situation, but the little things are great for your morale.

A lot of these ideas are ones our grandmothers used back in the days before "new and improved." When we find ourselves without fully-stocked store shelves, being able to fall back on these simple solutions might make a difference in our quality of life.

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What about the cost savings? Right now, you can buy a four-pound box of baking soda at your supermarket for less than $2. It’s safe, nontoxic, and multi-use.