



We dish the dirt on some of our testing methods

Sticky stains

We cover metal test plates with 2g of greasy fats, and bake them for three hours at 160°C, and cover other plates with 5.5g of sugar, and bake it on for one hour at 200°C. We then cool, apply the cleaners according to the manufacturers' instructions, rinse and rub with a damp cloth, before assessing how clean each plate is.

Spills and spoils

We also look at the damage each product does if it's spilt or used incorrectly. We spill each cleaner on a variety of surfaces and leave for 24 hours, before checking out the amount of damage caused. Two products tested – Mr Muscle Oven Cleaner and Astonish Oven Cleaner Spray – both damaged ceramic surfaces. Most specialist cleaners will corrode copper surfaces, so handle with care and follow the instructions.

Grime fighters

They're rough and tough but our Best Buys take the hard work out of cleaning your oven

Getting down and dirty in your oven is never fun, but our Best Buy oven cleaners can make life much easier and leave the inside of your cooker clean and sparkling.

Still, these specialist oven cleaners are made of strong stuff, so products should be packaged properly, but we found one that was not (see 'Take chemical caution', below right). Also, they should be labelled appropriately and used as safely as possible.

The cleaners need to be tough enough to cut through baked-on grime, therefore always handle with care, wear gloves and store the cleaners securely out of the reach of children.

Our two Best Buys are very different products. One is an easy-to-use foam spray, the other is a bag system for cleaning shelves with a liquid that can be used on the rest of your oven – but both are excellent at destroying grease and dirt.

However, some of you may want to use something a little milder, so we decided to test a range of generic kitchen cleaners and came out with mixed but perhaps not unexpected results.

If you don't mind using a bit of elbow grease you could consider a Brillo pad, which was the best of the generic kitchen cleaners on test.

These cleaners may also be useful, as specialist oven products cannot be used on all ovens (see 'Be oven alert', below left). Modern self-cleaning ovens – those with pyrolytic or catalytic liners – can be damaged by oven cleaners. Make sure you know what's suitable for your particular model.



These specialist cleaners need to be tough, therefore always handle with care

Take chemical caution

We found not all containers are capped correctly

Specialist oven cleaners are dangerous because they often use corrosive chemicals such as sodium hydroxide (caustic soda) as their active ingredient. The chemicals react with fats, so they're soluble in water and easy to wipe away.

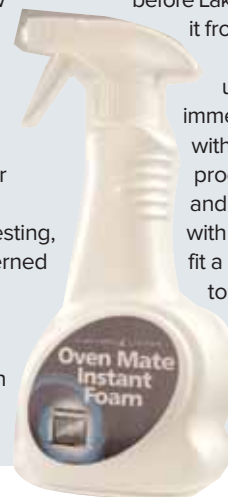
All products containing such chemicals should state clearly what they are and why they're dangerous. Always read the label, follow the instructions and remember that some products can corrode other surfaces in your kitchen.

During our testing, we were concerned about the packaging of a Lakeland product – Oven Mate Instant Foam (not the

Lakeland liquid listed opposite). The mail-order samples came in two parts – a bottle and trigger that screwed together.

But a bottle containing corrosive chemicals should come with a childproof cap and be assembled before use. As the lack of a childproof cap posed a safety risk to children, we considered making this a Don't Buy, before Lakeland removed it from sale.

Lakeland told us: 'We have immediately withdrawn the product from sale and are working with our supplier to fit a child safety cap to all current and future stock.' We'll tell you when it's repackaged and available.



Be oven alert

Check you're clear about how you should clean your oven

Around one in three ovens we own – that is, those with pyrolytic or catalytic liners – are self cleaning. They use super-heating programs to incinerate or burn off stains. If you use specialist cleaners on these ovens, they'll eat away at the liners.

Catalytic liners absorb grease and dirt, then burn it off at up to about 275°C while cooking. Pyrolytic liners burn off dirt and grease at up to

about 500°C, which incinerates food scraps into ash that is swept out once the oven cools. You'll still have some cleaning work to do, though; the shelves will need to be removed and washed separately and it's advisable to remove larger scraps of food before running the cleaning program. Pyrolytic programs can take two hours and, for safety, the oven door will lock during this time.



87% Oven Pride Oven Cleaning System £3.99

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

This impressive cleaner is great at cutting through tough, baked-on stains. It comes in two parts: a bottle of cleaning fluid and a handy bag in which you clean your oven shelves. With this versatile product, you use the liquid as a traditional oven cleaner and put your dirty oven shelves in the bag with some of the liquid. It's available from all major supermarkets.

Type Liquid and bag



84% Mr Muscle Oven Cleaner £1.88

We found that this Best Buy removed tough, cooked-on fatty stains quickly. This product was also good at cutting through baked-on sugar. The instructions for this cleaner are clear and, as it's a foam spray, it is easy to use. But it will damage ceramic surfaces, so keep it away from your ceramic hob if you have one. You'll find this product at all major supermarkets.

WHICH?
BEST
BUY

Type Aerosol foam

Contacts

Astonish
0113 236 0036
www.astonishcleaners.co.uk
Cif
0800 776646
www.unilever.co.uk
Dr Beckmann
01204 600505
www.acdo.co.uk
Jeyes
01842 757575
www.jeyes.com
Lakeland
01539 488100
www.lakeland.co.uk
Mr Muscle
0800 353533
www.scjohnson.co.uk
Oven Pride
01908 357707
www.priderange.co.uk

USING THE TABLE

We tested oven cleaners from leading brands and compared them with generic kitchen cleaners. The more stars the better.

Specification

Price For Best Buys we give the cheapest widely available high-street price as we went to press. Prices for other products are a guide.

Test performance

Performance How good the product is at removing baked-on fat and sugar.

Ease of use How easy it is to apply and remove the product.

Instructions How clear the information is on how to use the product.

Damage to other surfaces The damage that the product causes when used on other kitchen surfaces.

Safety How good the product's safety warnings are and how safely the product is packaged.

Score

Ignores price and is based on:

Performance	50%
Ease of use	25%
Instructions	10%
Damage to other surfaces	10%
Safety	5%

MODEL	SPECIFICATION		WHICH? TEST PERFORMANCE					SCORE %
	PRICE (£)	TYPE	PERFORMANCE	EASE OF USE	INSTRUCTIONS	DAMAGE TO OTHER SURFACES	SAFETY	
1 OVEN PRIDE Oven Cleaning System	3.99	Liquid and bag	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	87
2 MR MUSCLE Oven Cleaner	1.88	Aerosol foam	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	84
3 JEYES Kleen Off Oven Pads	1.09	Soap filled pads	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	71
4 DR BECKMANN Rescue Active Gel Oven Cleaner	2.79	Liquid pump spray	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	70
5 LAKELAND Ovenmate	7.99	Liquid	★★★★★	★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	67
6 CIF Fume Free Oven Spray	3.49	Liquid pump spray	★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★	★★★★★	64
7 ASTONISH Oven & Cookware Cleaning Paste	1.25	Paste	★★★★★	★★★	★★★	★★	★★★★★	58
8 GENERIC soap-filled scrubbing pads	0.84	Soap-filled pads	★★★★	★★★★	★★	n/a	★★★★★	54
9 ASTONISH Oven Cleaner Spray	1.99	Liquid pump spray	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	★★★★	51
10 GENERIC caustic soda	1.69	Powder	★★★★	★★★★	★	★★★★★	★★★★★	47
11 GENERIC cream cleaner	1.27	Liquid	★	★★★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	45
12 GENERIC bicarbonate of soda	0.37	Powder	★★	★★★★	★★	★★★★★	★★★★★	39
13 GENERIC washing-up liquid	0.98	Liquid	★	★★★	n/a	★★★★★	★★★★★	29