

From Drab to Fab: Cleaning Your Outdoor Furniture

As the summer stretches on, and your patio furnishings start to show signs of use, you may want to try these simple ways of restoring them to their original lustre.

- **For vinyl cushions and fabrics without specific instructions for upkeep**, try a mixture of water and mild detergent with an “oxi-cleansing” additive for stains. Avoid chlorine bleach which can corrode stitching and cause discolouration. Rinse thoroughly and dry without direct sunlight. For longevity’s sake, invest in weather-resistant slipcovers.
- **Wicker** should be vacuumed and/or brushed before washing with a gentle soap/water solution, rinsing with a garden hose (not a power washer), and then patting dry.
- **Metal furniture** will keep its appearance longer if you apply and buff a coating of car wax after wiping clean and drying.
- **Natural woods** fare well when scrubbed with a commercial oil soap and water solution (not detergent), then rinsed with



water and patted dry. They can also retain their integrity longer with a weather-resistant stain or urethane treatment.

Pro tip: Before trying any of these techniques, always test in an inconspicuous area first.

Once your furniture is looking brand-new again, you can sit back, relax, and enjoy the summer!



Grill and Chill: Barbecue Safety Tips

With the outdoor cooking season in full swing, now is a good time to review best practices for staying safe when barbecuing. Keep these tips in mind the next time you fire up the barbecue:

First things first - Inspect and clean your barbecue at least once a year. If you have propane cylinders check if it's time for them to be inspected and re-certified or replaced.

Be prepared - Make sure you have a fire extinguisher and either baking soda, sand, or kosher salt on hand. In the case of a fire, use an extinguisher if it's still burning after 30 seconds.

Choose the right spot - Keep your barbecue on level ground, at least 10 feet away from your house and combustible material, as well as away from wind. Never leave a flame unattended.

Food for thought - Don't leave raw meat out at room temperature for more than 2 hours, and once cooked consume within an hour (or less) during hot weather, as it can grow harmful bacteria otherwise. Be sure to cover or chill your food, especially any dishes with egg or dairy, until it is ready to be served.

Check the temperature - Cook food thoroughly. Your safest bet is to use a food thermometer.

Be careful not to cross-contaminate - Use separate plates and cutting boards for raw meat than for the rest of your food. Also, do not reuse your marinade, and wash your hands after handling raw meat.

Watch out for tiny hands and paws - Be aware of children and pets around the grilling area.

Happy barbecuing!

Breathing Easier: Indoor Air Quality

Between COVID-19 and the alarming occurrence of forest fires, among the things we have learned is to not take the air we breathe for granted. While we can't control what may be in the air outside, many homeowners have been paying more attention to their indoor air quality. As a result, there have been many questions about residential air filters, and how effective they might be. Among the most reliable types are those that are defined as meeting the standard for “high-efficiency particulate air”, also known as HEPA. However, filtering is only half the challenge. Your HVAC system needs to send a certain volume of air through a HEPA filter to meet a clean air delivery rate (CADR). Look for a CADR of at least two-thirds of the room's area (e.g., 120 square feet would need a CADR of at least 80).

The bigger your home, the greater the fan capacity required to circulate indoor air through your filters adequately. Furthermore, many homeowners choose additional and more focused air cleaning by installing “air purifiers” in specific rooms. Although they don't really “purify”, they do clean the air to a particular standard, if they are designed to serve the room size with an effective CADR.



The bottom line: You need to establish what your needs are to know which unit(s) will effectively do the job of filtering out allergens like dust and dander, as well as bacteria and other contaminants.