

Seven recession beating, money saving tips

1. White vinegar

When it comes to multi-use products, white vinegar is king. Here are just some of the ways vinegar can be used: Make up a 25% vinegar/75% water mixture and use it to clean the windows. To remove limescale, wrap paper towel soaked in hot vinegar around the base of taps - leave for an hour - then remove and rinse. (This should not be done to plated fixings, as it will ruin the finish). Strong vinegar also makes a good natural spray-on weed killer.

2. Bicarbonate of soda

The queen to vinegar's king, bicarbonate of soda is another must-have household item. Here are some of its very many uses: Wash your hands with bicarbonate of soda instead of soap to remove stubborn smells like onions. Mix it with water and use it to dissolve really stubborn muck and grease. Freshen up everything from smelly shoes (sprinkle it in dry and leave overnight) to stinky dish cloths (add two tablespoons to water and soak overnight). Close relative soda water can also be used to get red wine out of carpets: Just pour it over the stain, then absorb with layers of paper towel. Repeat until the stain has disappeared! Y

3. Lemons

Lemon juice works particularly well as a natural bleaching agent and stain remover. For example: Whiten your nails by soaking them in a mix of water and lemon juice for five minutes. Leave half a lemon in your fridge to get rid of nasty whiffs. Mix lemon juice with salt to clean copper.

4. Bananas

Staying on the fruity theme - bananas have a couple of tricks up their sleeve as well. As well as making an excellent food for babies, peeled bananas can be wrapped in cling-film, frozen and then eaten a bit like ice cream!

On a non-edible note - you can also use banana skin to give brown leather footwear an extra shine: Just rub the inside of the banana skin over the shoe, then polish as usual (removing any rogue fruity bits!).

5. Oats

Oats are cheap to buy and enormously versatile - both inside and outside the kitchen. As well as being a cheap and healthy ingredient for muesli, crumble and many other recipes, oats can be used as part of homemade health and beauty treatments - like an exfoliating facial scrub.

6. Teabags

Do you use teabags more than once? The humble teabag has more uses than you can shake a stick at. For example: Two teabags (lukewarm, not hot!) can be applied to refresh tired eyes. A few teabags dug into the soil around rose bushes will nourish them and encourage growth. Scratches in wooden furniture can be disguised by wiping them with a soft cloth dipped in freshly-made tea. A wet tea bag wiped over razor burn can help reduce the sting.

7. Aqueous cream

And finally... aqueous cream is a non-perfumed emollient cream which is perfect for moisturising dry skin on any part of the body. It's available over the counter at pharmacies (which is probably why many people still don't know about it) and it's a heck of a lot cheaper than most of 'big brand' equivalent products. Aqueous cream also can be used instead of soap - and as an alternative to shaving foam for both men and women. And it's worth remembering that it's available on prescription. That means if you're entitled to free prescriptions, you'll be able to get it for nothing!