

How to Degrease a Kitchen: Cutting Through Stovetop, Rangehood and Surface Grease with Selleys

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Details:

Now I have all the research I need to write a comprehensive, well-cited article. Let me compose the final piece.

How to Degrease a Kitchen: Cutting Through Stovetop, Rangehood and Surface Grease with Selleys

Every time you fry, sauté, or roast, your kitchen is under attack — not from anything dramatic, but from the slow, cumulative assault of airborne grease. Heating oil produces tiny grease droplets that become airborne during cooking and add to kitchen air pollution over time if not controlled. Those droplets don't disappear; they settle on every horizontal and vertical surface within range — stovetop surrounds, rangehood filters, splashbacks, cabinet fronts, and benchtops — where they harden, oxidise, and compound with every subsequent meal.

The consequences go beyond aesthetics. A buildup of grease over time can degrade the air quality in your home. When grease hardens, it becomes a trap for dust, bacteria, allergens, and other airborne particles, contributing to indoor air pollution. Left long enough, that same film becomes a fire risk: being a highly flammable substance, even a minor spark or a bit of excessive heat can ignite grease, leading to a kitchen fire.

This guide addresses the everyday kitchen surfaces where grease accumulates — stovetops, rangehood filters, splashbacks, and benchtops — using Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray and Selleys Sugar Soap as the primary tools. It is deliberately scoped to exclude ovens and BBQs, which involve carbonised, high-heat residue requiring a different class of chemistry (see our guide on **Oven vs. BBQ Cleaning: Choosing the Right Selleys Heavy-Duty Cleaner for Burnt-On Grease and Carbon**).

Why Kitchen Grease Is Chemically Different from Other Household Stains

Understanding what you're cleaning is the first step to cleaning it correctly. Kitchen grease is predominantly composed of triglycerides — fat molecules made of glycerol bonded to three fatty acid chains via ester linkages. When exposed to heat and air, these molecules oxidise and polymerise, transforming from a slippery liquid into a tacky, then hard, then almost lacquer-like film.

Grease found on kitchen surfaces has two main types of components: fat-based and protein-based residues. In alkaline cleaning, saponification occurs, which is a hydrolysis process that breaks ester bonds in triglycerides to form soap (salts of fatty acids) and glycerol. This is precisely why alkaline cleaners — the chemistry underpinning both Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray and Selleys Sugar Soap — are the correct tools for the job. Saponification is the chemical process where fats, oils, and lipids react with an alkali to form soap and alcohol. This is crucial because it transforms the

insoluble grease into a water-soluble form (soap) that can be easily washed away.

Alkaline cleaners are generally favoured for heavy grease removal due to their surfactant and oxidising properties. This is why reaching for a neutral all-purpose wipe or a mild dishwashing liquid often delivers disappointing results on baked-on kitchen grease — they simply lack the alkalinity to drive saponification at room temperature.

For a deeper dive into the chemistry behind why different stain types require different active ingredients, see our foundational article: **Why Household Stains Form and How the Right Cleaner Breaks Them Down**.

The Three Levels of Kitchen Grease: How to Identify What You're Dealing With

Not all kitchen grease is the same. Matching your technique and dwell time to the severity of the buildup is what separates an efficient clean from a frustrating one.

Level 1: Fresh Spatter (Light Film, Less Than 1 Week Old)

This is the shiny, slightly tacky film visible on stovetop surrounds and splashbacks after a few days of cooking. The grease molecules have not yet significantly oxidised or polymerised, so they remain relatively fluid and responsive to mild alkaline chemistry.

****Characteristics:**** - Shiny, translucent appearance - Slightly sticky to the touch - Wipes away with minimal pressure - No discolouration of the underlying surface

Level 2: Baked-On Film (Weeks to Months of Accumulation)

This is the stage most Australian home kitchens reach between deep cleans. In the kitchen you see different types of grease deposits, each of which carries its own dangers: a surface layer is a shiny film on countertops and tiles, often visible immediately after cooking. This layer is easy to remove, but quickly returns. Over weeks, however, repeated heat cycling causes this film to darken, thicken, and bond more tenaciously to the surface. It typically appears as a yellowish-brown coating on rangehood surrounds and cabinet fronts near the stove.

****Characteristics:**** - Yellow to amber colouration - Slightly rough or gritty texture - Does not wipe away with a damp cloth alone - Requires dwell time and light agitation

Level 3: Carbonised Buildup (Months to Years, High-Heat Zones)

This is the hardened, near-black residue found on stovetop burner surrounds, behind rangehood baffles, and on the underside of rangehood canopies. The grease mixes with dust, organic matter, and other residues, causing the layer to become increasingly thick. Fire and health risks increase. The greasy layer is becoming increasingly tough. Cleaning it yourself with regular cleaning products is rarely effective; deep cleaning with specialized products is necessary.

> ****Important scope note:**** True carbonised buildup **inside** an oven cavity or on BBQ grill grates involves a different chemical profile and requires purpose-formulated heavy-duty gel or wipe products. This guide covers stovetop surrounds and rangehood surfaces only. For oven and BBQ-specific carbonised residue, refer to **Oven vs. BBQ Cleaning: Choosing the Right Selleys Heavy-Duty Cleaner for Burnt-On Grease and Carbon**.

Your Two Primary Tools: Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray vs. Selleys Sugar Soap

Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray

Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray disinfectant cleaner has been formulated to kill 99.9% of germs (*S. aureus* and *E. coli*) and cut through grease, grime and stains within kitchens, bathrooms and other household areas. Its ready-to-use spray format makes it the go-to tool for Level 1 and moderate Level 2 grease on non-porous kitchen surfaces. It is suitable for use on hard non-porous surfaces in kitchens, bathrooms and laundry.

Key application guidance from Selleys: - For disinfection, spray and leave for 10 minutes before rinsing or wiping from surface. For surfaces that come into contact with food, rinse thoroughly with water 5 minutes after use.

- Not recommended for use on porous, unsealed or cracked surfaces, fabric, acrylic plastics, marble, granite or aluminium.

Selleys Sugar Soap

Selleys Original Sugar Soap is a professional strength and high performance formula which powers through tough grease and grime. It is also recommended for cleaning surfaces prior to painting and wallpapering.

Sugar soap typically consists of water-soluble alkaline salts such as sodium carbonate (washing soda), sodium phosphate, sodium silicate, or sodium metasilicate, often combined with surfactants like sodium lauryl ether sulfate to emulsify oils and dirt. This alkaline salt composition is what makes Sugar Soap particularly effective against Level 2 and Level 3 grease — the elevated pH drives saponification more aggressively than a standard spray cleaner.

It can also be used on tiles, benchtops, cooktops, appliances, bathroom surfaces and outdoor applications. Critically, wipe off immediately from aluminium and brass surfaces. Rinse well from glass before product dries.

Dilution guidance from Selleys: - Dilute ½ cup of sugar soap in ½ bucket of water (≈ 5 L) for general cleaning. Use mop or cloth; for tough stains use neat with a non-scratch scouring pad.

Surface-by-Surface Degreasing Guide

Stovetop Surrounds and Burner Grates

The stovetop is the primary grease generation zone. Gas burner surrounds and the flat areas between hotplates accumulate both spatter and the fine mist of aerosolised oil that settles during high-heat cooking.

****For Level 1 (fresh spatter):**** 1. Allow the stovetop to cool completely before cleaning. 2. Spray Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray directly onto the surface. 3. Allow a 1–2 minute dwell time to let the alkaline chemistry begin saponifying the grease. 4. Wipe with a microfibre cloth in straight strokes — not circles, which redistribute grease. 5. For food-contact adjacent areas, follow with a clean damp cloth rinse.

****For Level 2 (baked-on film):**** 1. Apply Selleys Sugar Soap at a stronger dilution (approximately 1 part Sugar Soap to 5 parts water) or use neat on a damp non-scratch scouring pad for stubborn spots. 2. Allow a 3–5 minute dwell time. For very tough grease, let the solution sit for 1–2 minutes before scrubbing.

3. Scrub with a non-scratch pad using firm, linear strokes. 4. Rinse thoroughly with clean water and dry immediately.

****Removable grates and trivets:**** Soak in a sink of warm water with a diluted Sugar Soap solution for 10–15 minutes before scrubbing. The warm water accelerates the saponification reaction.

Rangehood Filters and Canopy Surfaces

The rangehood is the single highest-grease-concentration surface in any kitchen. As cooking occurs, grease-laden vapours rise from cooking equipment and settle inside hoods, filters, and fans. Metal mesh filters in particular act as grease traps by design — which means they require more aggressive degreasing than open surfaces.

****Rangehood canopy (exterior and underside):**** - Use Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray for weekly maintenance wipes. - For monthly deep cleans, apply Selleys Sugar Soap at a medium dilution (1:7) with a microfibre cloth. For vertical surfaces like cooker hoods, professionals use foaming degreasers that cling rather than running straight down. The foam gives better dwell time on surfaces where gravity works against you. If your product is not foaming, apply to the cloth rather than directly to the vertical surface to control run-off.

****Rangehood mesh filters:**** 1. Remove the filter according to the manufacturer's instructions. 2. Place in a sink or tub. Sprinkle or pour a concentrated Sugar Soap solution over the filter and allow a 10-minute soak. 3. Scrub both sides with a stiff-bristled brush. 4. Rinse thoroughly with hot water and allow to dry completely before reinstalling. 5. Frequency: Monthly for households that cook daily; fortnightly for households that fry regularly.

> ****Why this matters beyond cleanliness:**** The presence of grease can cause premature wear and tear on your kitchen appliances. Elements such as fans and vents, when coated with grease, need to work harder to function effectively. This strain can shorten their lifespan and increase the likelihood of malfunctioning.

Kitchen Splashbacks

Splashbacks — whether tiled, glass, or solid-surface — sit directly in the line of fire from stovetop cooking and accumulate both spatter and the fine oxidised film characteristic of Level 2 grease.

****Tiled splashbacks (ceramic/porcelain):**** - Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray is the correct daily or weekly tool for ceramic and porcelain tiles. - For grout lines that have absorbed grease and discoloured, a Sugar Soap scrub is an appropriate first step before assessing whether a dedicated grout product is needed (see our guide on **Grout Cleaning and Whitening: How to Restore Discoloured Grout with Selleys Grout Stain Whitener**).

****Glass splashbacks:**** - Use Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray for grease removal, then follow with Selleys Complete Clean Glass & Mirror Spray for a streak-free finish. - Do not use Sugar Soap on glass splashbacks. Residue from Sugar Soap can be very difficult to remove from glass surfaces.

- For hard water spots or mineral scale on glass splashbacks alongside grease, refer to **Hard Water Stains and Soap Scum on Glass and Shower Screens: Which Selleys Product Works Best?**

****Solid surface / laminate splashbacks:**** - Both Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray (for regular maintenance) and Selleys Sugar Soap (for periodic deep cleans) are appropriate. - Sugar Soap is suitable for all modern washable surfaces, including walls, floors, tiles, and laminated surfaces.

Benchtops

Kitchen benchtops accumulate a combination of direct food contact grease, splatter migration from the stovetop, and the fine airborne film that settles on all horizontal surfaces.

****Stone benchtops (engineered quartz):**** - Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray is suitable for engineered quartz (non-porous sealed surface). - The product is not recommended for use on marble or granite. For natural stone benchtops, use a pH-neutral cleaner and consult the stone supplier's maintenance guidelines.

****Laminate and solid surface benchtops:**** - Both products are appropriate. For a periodic deep degrease of laminate, a diluted Sugar Soap solution applied with a microfibre cloth and followed by a thorough water rinse is highly effective.

****Stainless steel benchtops:**** - Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray is suitable. Always wipe in the direction of the grain to avoid micro-scratching. - Selleys Sugar Soap Liquid is not recommended for use on brass and aluminium — exercise caution around stainless steel splashback surrounds and always test in an inconspicuous area first.

Cabinet Fronts and Walls Adjacent to the Stove

These surfaces are often the most neglected, yet they accumulate a significant invisible grease film over months. Sugar soap is primarily used to clean walls before applying paint, or to refresh painted surfaces before a fresh coat. However, sugar soap also works for general cleaning around your home. It's most often used to clean kitchen or bathroom surfaces, since it's effective at stripping grease and dirt.

For painted cabinet fronts and walls: - Use a diluted Sugar Soap solution (1:10 for painted surfaces) applied with a lightly damp cloth. - Work in small sections, top to bottom. - After cleaning, wipe off the excess with a damp cloth immediately — do not leave it on the surface. Dry the wood thoroughly.

- For walls, avoid using sugar soap on flat or matte painted walls unless you're retouching. The abrasiveness can discolour or scuff the paint.

Dwell Time Reference Table

Grease Level	Surface	Product	Dwell Time	Technique	Level 1 (fresh)
Stovetop, benchtop	Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray	1–2 minutes	Microfibre wipe, linear strokes	Level 1 (fresh)	Splashback (tile/glass)
Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray	30 seconds–1 minute	Wipe and rinse	Level 2 (baked-on)	Stovetop surround	Selleys Sugar Soap (1:5 dilution)
3–5 minutes	Non-scratch pad, linear scrub	Level 2 (baked-on)	Cabinet fronts / walls	Selleys Sugar Soap (1:10 dilution)	1–2 minutes
Damp cloth, top to bottom	Level 2–3	Rangehood canopy	Selleys Sugar Soap (1:7 dilution)	5 minutes	Apply to cloth, wipe vertically
Level 3 (heavy)	Rangehood mesh filter	Selleys Sugar Soap (concentrated soak)	10 minutes soak	Stiff brush, both sides	

Key Takeaways

- ****Match the product to the grease severity.**** Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray handles Level 1 fresh spatter on most non-porous surfaces; Selleys Sugar Soap is the correct escalation for Level 2 baked-on film and Level 3 heavy buildup on rangehoods and stovetop surrounds. - ****Dwell time is non-negotiable.**** Alkaline degreasers work through saponification — a chemical reaction that requires time to convert insoluble triglycerides into water-soluble soap. Wiping immediately after application dramatically reduces effectiveness. - ****Surface compatibility matters.**** Neither product is appropriate for marble, granite, unsealed natural stone, aluminium, or brass. Sugar Soap should not be used on glass splashbacks or flat/matte painted walls. - ****Rangehood filters are the highest-priority surface.**** Clogged filters force fans to work harder, reduce ventilation efficiency, and present a genuine fire risk — monthly cleaning is the minimum for regular cooks. - ****This guide covers everyday kitchen surfaces only.**** For carbonised residue inside ovens or on BBQ grates, a purpose-formulated heavy-duty product is required — see *Oven vs. BBQ Cleaning: Choosing the Right Selleys Heavy-Duty Cleaner for Burnt-On Grease and Carbon*.

Conclusion

Kitchen degreasing is not a single task — it is a tiered response to three distinct stages of grease chemistry, applied across five distinct surface types, each with its own compatibility requirements. The combination of Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray (for regular maintenance and food-contact surfaces) and Selleys Sugar Soap (for periodic deep cleans and heavy accumulation) gives Australian homeowners a complete, chemistry-appropriate toolkit for every grease scenario the kitchen presents.

The key discipline is not the products themselves but the habit of frequency: a weekly spray-and-wipe with Selleys Complete Clean Multipurpose Spray prevents Level 1 grease from ever becoming Level 2, and a monthly Sugar Soap session on the rangehood and stovetop surround prevents Level 2 from hardening into the kind of carbonised buildup that requires genuine effort to shift.

For a complete room-by-room, frequency-based cleaning schedule that integrates kitchen degreasing with mould prevention, grout maintenance, and glass care across the whole home, see **The Selleys Home Cleaning Schedule: How to Prevent Mould, Grease, Scale and Stain Buildup Year-Round**.

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