

Holiday Help From “The Help”

(NAPSA)—When the winter holidays arrive, the savvy modern hostess might consider taking a page from the past. Carpets, furniture and clothing certainly fell victim to spills and stains 50 years ago the same way they do today.

That era is the setting of this year’s blockbuster movie “The Help,” DreamWorks’ hit film based on Kathryn Stockett’s No. 1 New York Times best seller, on Blu-ray and DVD this December. “The Help” portrays the lives of women from all walks of life in 1960s Jackson, Mississippi. The movie begins when one of the main characters lands her first journalist job writing a “Miss Myrna’s Cleaning Hints” column and while researching the topic, ends up building an unlikely friendship that evolves into a remarkable demonstration of women helping other women.

To help you, here are a few tried-and-true tips from the ’60s and before that rely on simple products still found in most homes today. It is helpful to treat all stains as quickly as possible; otherwise, blot with a clean, dry cloth, then cover with a damp cloth to await treatment.

- **Red wine:** A spill on the carpet may seem like an emergency that threatens to ruin a holiday shindig, but there’s actually a simple fix. Merely blot up as much of the stain as possible with an absorbent cloth, then saturate the stain with club soda and go back to entertaining your guests. Later, apply a paste of three parts baking soda, one part water. Let dry for 24 hours and then vacuum.

- **Chocolate:** Should a plate of gooey confections get flipped over to land on the couch, simply scrape off excess chocolate with a butter knife, then mix one tablespoon of liquid detergent with two cups of cool water and blot the



Keeping your home clean and festive for the holidays can be as simple today as it was 50 years ago.

stain with a clean cloth until the stain disappears. Finish by sponging the area with cold water, blotting dry and helping yourself to another piece.

- **Wax:** When a candle melts onto the good tablecloth, no need for you to melt, too. Once the dinner is over and the wax has cooled, much of it will peel right off in your hands. If it doesn’t, try freezing it. Next, crank up your iron to high heat and, on an ironing board, place one folded paper towel underneath the waxy area and another folded paper towel on top. Run the heated iron over the area until the wax has transferred to the towel. Once the wax is removed, rub the area with liquid laundry detergent and wash as usual.

- **Gravy:** Should a drop of gravy fall on fabric, first try washing the stain with warm water and dish soap. If the stain persists, try dabbing it with a solution of ½ cup of water, ½ teaspoon ammonia and ½ teaspoon iodized salt.

- **Cranberry:** Another holiday staple that is capable of ruining clothing if not attended to is the delicious cranberry sauce. To eliminate these bright red stains,

scoop up as much of the sauce as you can—as quickly as you can—and then rinse with cold water. Next, mix one tablespoon of white vinegar and ½ teaspoon of liquid laundry detergent with one quart of cool water and soak in this solution for 15 minutes.

Specific snafus aside, some other powerful cleaners that you probably already have on hand are white vinegar, baking soda and even hair spray. Believe it or not, coffee, tea, mustard and grease can all be treated by soaking with a little undiluted white vinegar and rinsing before the vinegar has a chance to dry. Stains such as ink can be cleared away with a paste of vinegar and baking soda allowed to dry on the spot before washing the garment as normal. Lastly, a few squirts of hair spray can not only keep hairs in place but can remove lipstick and marker stains. Bonus: Hair spray also preserves cut flowers and stops panty hose runs in their tracks.

Armed with these tips from the past, you’ll be able to protect your home and guests from some of the most common mishaps of holiday entertaining with ease.