

## KITCHEN CLEAN-UP AFTER FEAST

### HOW TO CLEAN IT AND STILL HAVE TIME & ENERGY TO PARTY!

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While there should be a law that carries a stiff sentence for breaking it, "he/she who cooks doesn't clean" seems to be a rule that isn't in the minds of most feasters these days. The feast steward/head cook/or whatever you want to call them, has been on their feet for hours, working like a drudge, and wrangling untrained volunteers, and keeping track of everything going on in the kitchen, and meeting with hall stewards and server captains, and dealing with the people in charge of high table, and trying to remember that we do this for fun. The last thing they need to deal with is cleaning up the kitchen they've been sweating in for days. This should be handled by a competent clean-up crew. Here is how we do this.

You will need a leader. Pick someone to do this job. If you do not, things will go sideways very rapidly.

This leader will communicate with the feast steward, preferably during the day when they've still got a functioning brain. Find out the following things:

How will leftover food be dealt with? Make a list of those dishes which will be saved and which will be dumped.

Where are the leftover supplies: tin foil, plastic wrap, disposable aluminum trays, etc.?

What kitchen tools & equipment belong to the feast steward? Is it marked? Where do they want it stacked when it's all clean?

What kitchen equipment was used? Stove & oven are usually a given, but did they use the flat top grill, or the deep fryer or a warming cabinet?

Where are the cleaning supplies and trash bags kept? What chemicals are used on the floors, countertops, & flat top and where are they? Where is the mop bucket & mops?

How is the feast hall to be left? Chairs & tables put away, or placed in a certain pattern? Or will this be dealt with by a separate crew?

Where are the dumpsters for trash? If no dumpster, what is the proper way to take care of the trash?

That evening, have the cleanup crew assemble in the feast hall during service of the last course. Have them set up a wash station where the feasters can wash their dishes. Hot, soapy water in one bus pan, hot clean water (do not add bleach; some dishes and people are not compatible with bleach and your friends will hate you if you wreck their cool feast gear or give them dermatitis), with a couple of rags or sponges. This should be accessible to the feasters as

soon as dessert hits the tables. Ensure there is a trash can with a plastic liner for scraping plates. Assign one person to watch that station during populace wash-up and change out the soapy water before it gets nasty.

If there is a dish sanitizing machine in the kitchen you are using, make sure it is turned on, and ready to go. Anything that can be washed while the dessert is being served can be tackled by a couple of people, but do NOT get in the feast crew's way. They are tired, sore, hopefully pleased with their weekend's work, but likely to be a bit pissy if you get in their way. Be kind and respect their space while it is still theirs.

If you are required to wash the floors, put a couple of large pots half full with water on the stove and crank it up. Usually, by the time you get to the point where floors are on your task list, you might just be out of hot water, and you will need really hot water to wash kitchen floors. Trust me on this.

Once dessert has left the kitchen and gone to the feast hall, have a very short conversation with the feast steward (it helps if you also hand them a cold beer/wine/adult beverage of choice). Confirm the leftover decisions of the afternoon meeting, confirm where their personal kitchen stuff is going to be placed when the cleaning is complete, and send them to the showers.

Have 2-3 people carefully wash their hands, then tackle the leftover food situation. Consolidate each dish into containers (I mostly use gallon Ziploc plastic bags for this), using as few containers as possible, since these will probably have to be transported by the feast steward on Sunday (or even that night). Place the leftovers in the fridge as the containers get full. Make sure there are no trays of food left in the fridges that have not been addressed by the leftover team.

While this leftover team is doing their job, get another person to help the High Table steward get all the dishes off High Table and washed, dried, and packed away. Do not leave this task until "later". Get it out of the way and send the High Table steward to bed. They will love you for it.

If you have more people to dedicate to jobs, you can have them clear all SCA-owned service equipment from the tables in the hall. Some groups own a lot, some groups own none, but make sure you get it all out of the hall before you start losing your volunteers. Note from a full-time feast steward: Do NOT add anything from these service pieces to the leftovers. Throw it all away unless you have been specifically told not to by the feast steward. The stuff has probably been sitting on the tables for a couple hours, with all sorts of fingers and utensils being dipped in them.

After the leftovers are put away, the leader can assign these folks to other jobs, which will be discussed shortly. The leader should make a pass through the entire kitchen, looking into every fridge, oven, speed racks & warming cabinet to check for leftover feast food that is still in camp/kitchen pots, pans, trays & containers. This is quality control. A feast steward does not need to deal with the stray batch of a feast dish that has been left overnight in a camp-owned hotel pan. Get the food dealt with, get the pans to the cleaners, and leave nothing in camp equipment for Sunday morning pack-out, when the feast steward is usually alone and just wants to go home.

Once you have done your quality check, have someone clean all the counter tops. Scrub them with hot, soapy water, then rinse with clean water with a little bleach in it. You will need the clean space for "clean hands". See below.

By now, the High Table gear should be finished and packed away. Dishwashing will now commence in earnest. You only need a couple of people for this. Make sure one of them knows how to run the Hobart (or other dish sanitizing machine). Remember, it's a sanitizer. Making sure the food is scraped & rinsed off is of prime importance. Make sure they have a trash can with a liner available and relatively empty. The order of cleaning doesn't matter much. Pots, dishes, silverware, etc. can be run through the sanitizer in whatever order you want. Just get it done.

Designate one person as "clean hands". This person has just one purpose. As the dishes come out of the sanitizer, they are the person who puts stuff away. Hang pots, stack dishes, and put away the silverware. Ideally, they will have knowledge of the "wheres" of the kitchen. Where do the pots go? If no one with knowledge of the kitchen is present, the best thing to do is stack dishes by type on the clean counter tops. Try real hard not to put things in the wrong places. Kitchen managers really hate it when they can't find their equipment after a rental. Take your time and hunt for the logical storage spaces for all the equipment.

Designate a couple of people to finish cleaning up the feast hall while the dishes are being done. Make sure they have a wash bucket and rags to clean tables. If you're lucky, you might have some folks willing to knock down tables and chairs (if this is required). Follow the instructions you obtained from the event or feast steward. If you still have some folks willing to help, get them to sweep the hall.

When the dishwashers are close to being done, it's time to tackle the stove. Your pots of hot water will hold heat for hours. Just set them on a counter. Take the burners out and lift off the cover plates. Take the cover plates to a sink and wash them, making sure you've got all the food splatters off them. Clean the burner racks as well. If the flat top grill got used, make sure that you use the kitchen-

approved method of cleaning and get the grill cleaned off. Some kitchens still use a pumice brick and hot water to clean. Some kitchens use grill conditioner in a spray can. If neither of these is available to you, turn the grill on early in the cleaning process and get it warm. Scrape it with a spatula, then use a green scrubby pad and hot water (NO Soap, NO bleach!) and make sure it's clean. Leave it turned on, and BE CAREFUL! Once it is dry, put some vegetable oil on a paper towel & lightly oil the flat top, then turn it off.

Check all ovens for spills. Clean up any spills you find, including the inner surfaces of the oven door. There is not much else you can do.

Your dishwashers have worked their butts off. Do not make them do anything else except have a beer. Thank them effusively.

Make sure everything that CAN be put away, IS put away. Then assign a surface-cleaning crew. All counter tops, dish machine ramps, and service pass-throughs get another wash & rinse with bleach. Let them air dry, and have someone sweep the floor. Make sure they get UNDER counters and stoves as well as around everything else. At this point, you should also be emptying all but one trash can.

You should now be down to the person who is willing to wash the floors, and the leader. In a perfect world, that floor washer hasn't done much that required heavy lifting, because washing a kitchen floor isn't child's play. Find the mop bucket & make mop water while the floor is being swept and the trash emptied. Use the hot water from the pots first; if you need clean water during the floor washing process, the hot water heater should have recovered by then.

Wash the floor, using the floor cleaner provided by the kitchen manager. Do NOT use any more "soap" than is called for by the chemical. These chemicals do not have to be rinsed if you use the proper amount for the 2-gallon mop bucket. Extra soap will not clean any better, but it will require you to rinse the floor, which NO ONE IN THEIR RIGHT MIND wants to do at this hour.

The leader must now make a quality control pass through the hall, while the kitchen floor dries. Ensure the tables & chairs are where they're supposed to be, either knocked down and put away, or set in a pattern. When the kitchen floor is mostly dry, make another pass through the kitchen before calling it quits.

Some tips on volunteers:

Right at the end of feast, you will be more likely to get extra volunteers beyond your own crew. Utilize them wisely, to get the bulk of the early chores done in good time. They mostly won't want to do the heavy stuff, but they can

deal with leftovers, collect SCA gear from tables, help the High Table steward get their job done, etc.

The more hands you have, the faster this can get done, but there is a tipping point where the clock will move backwards. A talented cleanup crew can do this job in less than 90 minutes with a good leader willing to take the reins. The optimal number of experienced crew members is 6-8 at the beginning, whittling that down as jobs are completed. If you've never worked with the volunteers before, make yourself clear about what they are to do, and make sure they check out with you before leaving. It's really annoying to have someone leave when they're done (or maybe NOT done) with their job when you had something else for them to do.

The leader is the quality control supervisor, and must constantly make rounds of kitchen and hall to make sure all the tasks are being completed. Ideally, you should NOT be chained to the dish machine.

Oh, yeah, the tipping point. After the initial half-hour after the last course is served, you can probably use all the hands that actually volunteer. To clean the kitchen after that initial half-hour, cut it back to the optimal 6-8 people & try to make sure they are willing to go the distance. Clean up should not take much more than an hour after this point.

Utilize your team wisely. Play to their strengths. In other words, be a competent manager. It's not hard. Millions of us do it every day.

Say thank you to each person who helped you before you let them go. Shake their hand. Offer them a beverage (if you've got them).

Never forget that you REALLY don't want to do this job alone. Take your volunteers and put them to work. Service should be second nature to all of us. The goal is to leave it cleaner than it was when we got there. Make it happen.

## CHECKLIST FOR CLEAN-UP CREW LEADER

### **Feast Day Afternoon:**

Meet with the feast steward & ask your questions. Be brief & take notes.

### **During Service of Last Course:**

Assemble crew

Set up populace wash station

Make sure dish machine is fired up & ready to work

Two pots for hot floor washing water on the heat

### **Feast Service completed:**

Confirm questions with feast steward

Tackle leftovers

Assist High Table steward

Assign extra volunteers to clear tables

### **Quality check #1:**

Check for stray pans & trays of food in fridges, ovens, warming cabinets, speed racks, etc.

### **Leftovers Put Away:**

Clean all surfaces

### **High Table gear cleanup complete:**

Dish washing goes on full steam ahead

Assign "clean hands"

### **Dishes done:**

Clean the equipment

Sweep floor

Empty most trash cans

Release dish washers to their rest

### **Quality Check #2:**

Make a pass through the hall & kitchen & keep an eye out for stray stuff that needs to be cleaned

**Last Tasks:**

- Clean all surfaces again
- Sweep floor
- Mop floor
- Empty last trash can

**Quality Check #3**

- Check that everything is done right in kitchen & feast hall
- Shut off the lights in the kitchen, unless the feast steward tells you not to