



CARAMEL TO CRANBERRIES: HOLIDAY STAIN-BUSTING TIPS KEEP CARPETS BRIGHT

Whether it's the ghouls trick-or-treating on Halloween, the gobbles of great food on Thanksgiving, or the gatherings of loved ones over the holiday season, you will likely be hosting an event at your home in the upcoming months. Food and friends make the perfect pairing for celebrations – but that can mean spills and splashes on carpets. There's no need to panic when you know the tricks the pros use to treat tough holiday carpet stains.

"It is important to treat spots and stains promptly and properly to avoid letting them do permanent damage to the fibers," explains Barry Lichtenstein, a certified master textile cleaner and owner of Amcho Carpet Cleaning in Framingham, Mass.. "This can cause damage to either the color or texture of the fibers."

From splashes of punch and gravy to smears of caramel and cranberries, the holiday season can leave your carpet looking drab. Lichtenstein says many homeowners with good intentions are actually making stains worse by incorrectly treating the spots. He advises homeowners to avoid these common mistakes when treating carpet stains:

- Do not over-saturate the stain with cleaning products. This just makes a small spot larger.
- Do not rub the carpet. This can cause damage to the texture of the carpet.
- Do not put water on a dry soil. Rather, make sure to vacuum it first.

When fighting the inevitable drips and dribbles of entertaining at home, Lichtenstein says there are a few general best practices for treating carpet stains.

1. First, remove as much stain material as possible. If it is dry, vacuum up as much as you can. If it is semi-solid, scrape or scoop it up with a spoon or dull knife. If it is liquid, blot it up.
2. Next, blot the stain with cool water, and then blot dry.
3. Make foam using a mixture of 1/4 teaspoon liquid dishwashing soap in a cup of tepid water. Be sure to always test any cleaning agents in an inconspicuous area of the carpet first to ensure there is no adverse reaction with the flooring. If not, apply the foam with a sponge or soft brush to the stained area in a wiping motion going toward the center of the spot. If you start in the center with circular motions, the stain will spread.
4. Finally, blot with cool water, then blot dry.

From candy canes to fudge to Grandma's famous yams, most stains can be cleaned using these techniques. For additional stain removal information, Lichtenstein recommends visiting the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Residential Spot Solver on carpet-rug.org, or choosing a spot remover from the CRI list of tested and certified products.

In addition to stains, parties mean more foot traffic in your home. As people come and go during your holidays, you'll likely notice extra soil on carpets and other flooring. There's no need to panic that your carpet investment is compromised. Simply vacuum regularly with a quality vacuum that has received the CRI Seal of Approval, which means it's been tested thoroughly for soil removal, filtering and the ability to maintain the texture and appearance of carpet.

Frequent vacuuming is also a great way to keep the air in your home clean, especially during the long months of winter when we spend most of our time indoors. A high efficiency vacuum from the Seal of Approval list removes 80 percent or more of the soil in a carpet – making carpet a good option even for allergy sufferers.

"Carpets and upholstery fabrics should be cleaned on a regular basis before they show overall soiling or staining," Lichtenstein says. "When a high level of overall soiling or staining has been reached, there is always some permanent damage that has occurred. For the best results, clean the fabrics before they reach that level of soiling."

How often should you vacuum? The CRI recommends high-traffic or pet areas be vacuumed daily, medium-traffic areas be vacuumed about twice a week and light-traffic areas should be vacuumed weekly.

For tough holiday stains or deep set-in soils, it may be time to call in the professionals for help. Working with an IICRC certified firm (a leading certifying body for the cleaning and restoration industries) that uses CRI Seal of Approval equipment and cleaning agents ensures your carpets and upholstery will be cleaned the right way by knowledgeable experts.

Visit carpet-rug.org and www.criblog.org to learn more.

