

Caring For Your Collection of 1930's-1960's Vintage Printed Linens & Textiles

By Valerie

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Collecting 1930's-1960's vintage tablecloths and kitchen textiles can become an obsession; some might even call it an addiction. However, without the proper care, an entire collection can be ruined in no time.

Vintage tablecloths, kitchen towels, and similar printed linens from the 1930's -- 1960's are what is meant by "printed linens & textiles". You know... the colorful, printed designs on the sturdy cotton or linen that your grandmothers and great grandmothers used everyday; and the kind they don't make anymore.

Every vintage linen and textile lover has their own favorite cleaning method and stain removal. This is only one of many methods that are out there. However, most people will agree on always starting with the gentlest cleaning method and working your way up if further cleaning is necessary. Always soak your linens in a large plastic tub or sink, and never use metal containers. Also, it is important to realize that some old stains will never come out. So unless you can live with it, it is best to avoid purchasing badly stained linens.

If there are a few small stains, a stain stick can be used. Leave it on for at least a half hour before soaking. After spot treating, soak your item(s) for a few hours in hot water with your favorite detergent. Although some stains may disappear, others will not. Do not use chlorine bleach, as this will only fade colors on the cloth.

When it comes to laundering these items, you can wash by hand in the sink or, if the linen is sturdy, you can use a washing machine on the delicate cycle only. Any linens that are delicate, worn thin, or have holes should be washed by hand in the sink, and NOT the machine. Biz or Oxy-Clean mixed with hot water are popular choices. Let things soak for an hour or more. Swish and stir often often, while checking the progress frequently. It is important that you do not soak textiles with rayon, silk, wool, metallic gold, or metallic silver accents in Oxy-Clean. This causes an adverse reaction, resulting in holey and damaged linens. A long soak in regular laundry detergent is a safer alternative for those types of textiles. Rinse thoroughly, in cold water. Rinse again. Rinse again, until the water is crystal clear.

Hanging linens outdoors in the sunshine works well for brightening up whites. One of the safest and most effective methods of cleaning textiles is known as "crofting". Crofting (definition: The ancient method of whitening linen. After being soaked in a solution, the linens are separated on the grass over the sun), otherwise known as grass bleaching has been around for centuries. Simply lay clean, damp linens out on a green, grassy lawn on a sunny day. This will remove many stubborn stains naturally. A natural bleaching action occurs between the sunlight, water, and grass which will whiten and remove stains. Sun both sides equally, and spritz with water if necessary, as the cloth must be wet in order for the crofting to be effective.

Press with an iron. Spray lightly with water or starch if desired (again, using starch is a personal preference). Do not store linens on painted, varnished, or other treated wood surfaces, as chemicals from the coatings can affect the textiles, causing discoloration to the fabric.

A collection of vintage table linens and kitchen textiles from the 1930's to the 1960's can be found at <http://gypsyrosalie.com>. The majority of these linens have been restored and are in crisp, clean condition; all ready for your immediate use. Linens found unused, with their original labels in tact, will be sold as such to preserve their value as collectibles.

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Gypsy Rosalie's Trousseau is an online catalog of vintage linens, ladies handkerchiefs, and old fashioned textiles with the charm and nostalgia of the past, as well as fine quality workmanship, for both the home decorator and the serious collector.

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