

Care and Maintenance of Your Flatware



All flatware pieces require the following care to maintain their original beauty and any warranties throughout their service life. These basic care and handling procedures will help maintain the appearance and quality of metalware products. Certain finishes and pieces have additional handling considerations, which will be discussed below. It is your responsibility to convey this information to your customers and staff.

Handling & Storage

Stainless Steel flatware should not be exposed to acidic or alkaline foods for an extended time to prevent corrosion. Do not store stainless steel flatware in contact with iron tableware to prevent oxidation reactions. To prevent deformation or release of harmful substances, never heat flatware in a microwave oven or other high-temperature equipment.

When clearing tables, be sure to separate flatware, hollow ware, and dinnerware into separate bus pans to prevent scratching. In addition, sort flatware by item (forks with forks, spoons with spoons, and so on). Tableware should be stored in a dry and ventilated area, away from direct sunlight, to prevent discoloration and corrosion.

Pre-Soaking

Never leave dirty knives, forks, spoons or any flatware unwashed for long periods (over 4 hours), as this could damage the finish and void any warranty claims. As soon as possible after service they should be pre-soaked in hot water (140°F-160°F) with a **chlorine-free, non-abrasive detergent** for 10-15 minutes and then removed. Be sure to check that the proper quality and quantity of detergent is used, as well as a water softener to avoid extremely damaging calcium deposits. Pre-soaking should be done in the appropriate tub taking care not to mix forks, spoons, and knives! This is important to prevent scratching. You also want to avoid using steel wool or metal scrapers to remove any food remnants from flatware and hollowware.

Studies show that more than 70% of corrosion is the result of food soil left on the flatware. The acids in the food (tartaric, tannic, citric, etc.) are the starting point of pitting or surface corrosion.

Washing

A high-temperature, mild detergent system is the preferred method; avoid low-temperature chemical sanitization!

RSS always recommends a high temperature commercial dishwasher for flatware because low-temperature and residential units rely on the use of chemicals that usually contain chloride for sanitizing.

Washing should be done as soon as possible, using a proper plastic wash basket with compartments for forks, spoons, and knives. Different items should never be mixed in the same compartment to prevent scratches. Spoons, forks, and knives should be stood with the handle down to allow proper washing and drying.

After metalware is clean, rinse with very hot water. Again, you may choose to use a water softener to avoid extremely damaging calcium deposits (stain marks and, in the long run, pitting).

Drying

Proper drying should be carried out to avoid water spots, particularly on the blades of knives. Improper drying may also lead to corrosion. Flatware and hollowware need the same maintenance. Simply remove the metalware from the baskets and lay it out on a towel to fully dry before putting away. For storage, make sure it is clean and dry and store in a dry area away from humidity and grease.

Knives & Knife Blades

Knife handles and blades are made from hardened stainless steel, which is necessary to retain their cutting edge. This grade of stainless, while being resistant to most foods and chemicals, is more subject to spotting and pitting than the grade of stainless steel used in other pieces. The conditions that most commonly cause spotting or pitting are prolonged contact with foods that contain chloride such as salt, salad dressing, etc. **Spotting will also occur if knives are soaked in water or are not thoroughly dried promptly after washing.**

Stainless Steel Flatware

When caring for stainless steel, contact with dissimilar metals, such as silver, during washing can cause discoloration or pitting. Discoloration can also be caused by certain foods such as salt, tea, coffee, salad dressing, vinegar and mustard that are absorbed by the oxide film on the steel. If using a dishwasher, do not overcrowd flatware and leave room for water to circulate. Pitting and spotting are usually the result of: (1) a high mineral content in the water; (2) detergents with a high chloride amount; or (3) food with a high salt content. An occasional cleaning with a good polish specifically made for stainless steel should quickly restore your flatware to its original finish. Surface rust can often be removed by wiping gently with lemon, vinegar, or baking soda followed by a clean water rinse.

PVD Coated Flatware

The best way to care for PVD (Physical Vapor Deposition) coated flatware is to hand wash, wiping with a soft sponge or dishwashing brush using mild soap immediately after use, as prolonged exposure to salts and acids in foods (mustard, salad dressings, etc.) can damage the surface. **Never soak PVD flatware, never use abrasive scrubbers (including Scotch-Brite or steel wool), and avoid bleach and acidic detergents, as these all can damage the surface.** Dry with a soft cloth and make sure pieces are thoroughly dry before storing. PVD flatware should always be hand washed before the first use.

When machine washing is necessary, first rinse to remove any food residue. Use gentle detergents with a phosphate level below 3% and no sodium. Only wash with like metals; mixing stainless steel based PVD flatware with silver-plate, for example, will cause a chemical reaction which will damage the surface. Never lay your PVD flatware flat in a rack for washing, as pooling hot water may permanently mar the surface. Flatware should be washed standing in a compartmentalized rack, handles down. Do not mix different pieces together in a compartment; forks should be with forks, spoons with spoons, etc. To avoid spotting, remove the pieces from the washer at the end of the cycle and towel dry.

Silver and Gold-Plated Flatware

Never leave plated flatware unwashed overnight, as the acids in the foods could stain or pit the plating.

Prolonged soaking should also be avoided, and sponges or harsh detergents should never be used.

The plated flatware should only require polishing a few times a year using polish that is specifically made for silver or gold plate.

Wash plated flatware by hand for longest life. Gold-plated flatware should be **hand-washed only**, using a mild, non-chloride detergent. Low temperature commercial or residential dishwashers should not be used for plated flatware because the chemicals used for sanitizing will corrode the plating.

At RSS Distributors, we've always tried to provide our customers with the very best in tabletop products, and before selling any new items, we put them through a complete testing program. However, even after passing our testing, we can't duplicate all the environments that a product could be exposed to. That said, please follow the above guidelines as closely as possible to realize the longest possible lifetime for your flatware.