

The Boston Globe

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 21, 2000

Spill your coffee? Color your shirt!

Forget cleansers,
use whatever's
hanging around,
says Joey Green

By Ricki Morell
GLOBE CORRESPONDENT

Joey Green's latest book is "Clean Your Clothes With Cheese Whiz." It comes on the heels of "Polish Your Furniture with Panty Hose," "Paint Your House with Powdered Milk," and "Wash Your Hair with Whipped Cream."

Green — equal parts comedian and household-hints guru — has made a career out of finding weird uses for brand-name household products.

He'll be appearing this weekend at the Fall New England Home Show at the Bayside Expo-Center, where you can watch him polish a dining room table with Spam, clean a toilet bowl with Coca-Cola, or dye a shirt with Maxwell House coffee.

"If you have a nice clean white shirt and you spill a cup of coffee on it, you don't have to throw out the whole shirt," he said in a telephone interview from his home in Los Angeles. "Just dye the shirt with coffee. It takes about 30 seconds."

Green, a former contributing editor to National Lampoon and a former advertising copywriter at J. Walter Thompson, is a regular on the talk-show circuit. His shtick sounds like one of those old-fashioned live TV commercials gone awry: He has convinced Jay Leno of "The Tonight Show" to shave with Jif peanut butter (creamy, not chunky), and Katie Couric of "The Today Show" to drop her diamond ring in a glass of Efferdent denture cleanser.

"These are just products that everybody's got around the house, around the kitchen, the bathroom, the garage," he said. "The tips range from the practical to the bizarre."

You can get rid of a grease stain on clothing by rubbing Cheese Whiz on the stain before washing. The enzymes in the cheese break down the grease. You can give yourself a facial with Cheerios: The oats blot the oils on your face. You can soak your feet in Jello to deodorize them, or sprinkle Tabasco sauce in your backyard to keep away the squirrels and raccoons.

Here's a good one for Boston-area residents worried about the West Nile virus: Tie a sheet of Bounce fabric softener through a belt loop when outdoors. The oleander in it is a natural mosquito repellent.

"I've never come across a tip that doesn't work," said Green. "That's the strangest part of the whole thing."

So, how did a Cornell University graduate and an up-and-coming ad exec end up testing denture cleaner in his garage for a living?

"It was all kind of a fluke," he said.

While at J. Walter Thompson, he was called into a meeting with representatives from Nestle, which makes Nestea. They spent three hours in a conference brainstorming alternative uses for the powdered iced tea.

One guy, an avid sailor, said he had jumped into a bathtub filled with Nestea to ease a really bad sunburn. The tannic acid in the tea did the trick, giving new meaning, said Green, to the slogan, "Take the Nestea plunge."

Green decided it was so weird that it belonged in a book. At first, some companies were reluctant to give him permission to name their products. Then, however, they must have realized that any adver-

tising is good advertising. Some actually gave him "secret files" filled with letters from consumers who had used their products in strange ways.

Green's Web site, www.wack-yuses.com, continues the tradition. Some recent postings on the message board: Put Arid deodorant on mosquito bites to take away the itch; swallow a spoonful of Jif peanut butter to stop the hiccups; sprinkle Ajax cleanser by your doorway to keep the ants outside, scrub your copper pots with plain yogurt to take off the tarnish.

"People just love this stuff," Green said. "It's all the stuff that grandma told us."

You can, for example, spread French's mustard on your chest as a natural decongestant. You can spread Crisco vegetable shortening on your baby's behind to prevent diaper rash.

"Out here in LA we have a lot of plastic surgeons, and I had heard one of them recommend putting Crisco on your face to reduce scarring," said Green. "Of course you can't go out in the sun or you'll be extra crispy."

Green will be flying east this week with two steamer trunks filled with products. He's scheduled to appear at the New England Home Show at 7 p.m. tomorrow; 1, 3, and 6 p.m. Saturday; and 1 and 3 p.m. on Sunday. So far, he said, he hasn't found any special uses for Boston baked beans or Maine lobster.

"My main concern is showing people ways they can save money," he said. "You don't have to run out to the store to buy some strange toxic products. You can use right what you have at home."