



THE ARRIVAL OF SPRING BRINGS TULIPS, crocuses and a sense of renewal, new life, new beginnings and a chance to declutter and clean our homes. There are benefits to the process beyond the obvious. Cleaning closets, cabinets and kitchens enables the qi or life force to flow freely, freeing up physical, mental and emotional energy and allowing new possibilities and people to enter your life. Local experts approach the topic from spiritual and practical perspectives.

Mark and Leslie Jacobson own Feng Shui Consultants of Boca Raton. Says Leslie, "According to feng shui, clutter and negative energy affect your health and well-being."

"When cleaning, start small," says Mark. "Pick one area to declutter. You will feel a sense of accomplishment, which will give you motivation to tackle the next area. Organizing your home equals organizing your life."

All Florida Cleaning Service in Margate, owned by Rick and Patty Traegler, serves Broward and Palm Beach County. In 1990, Patty was working in Fort Lauderdale as a nanny for actor Lee Majors and his wife, Karen. It was Karen who taught Patty how to clean and inspired her to go into business for herself. "Cleaning is hard work, but worth it," says Patty. "I love cleaning; it makes people happy."

Her advice to the spring cleaner facing a daunting task at home?

Move furniture; clean behind the toilet; clean between the washer and dryer, under beds, baseboards and blinds. She likes to use Clorox Clean-Up Bleach, Windex and Lysol for showers and tubs.

For the past 27 years, Maid for Today has been owned by Coral Springs resident Myrna Detman. Located in Margate, Maid for Today services Plantation and Boca Raton. Detman's spring cleaning suggestions include cleaning air ducts, flipping mattresses, and changing bedding and window treatments to reflect the season.

wise words from the professionals

A fan of clean queen newspaper columnist He-loise and TV home and gardening shows, she is always searching for new cleaning techniques. Her favorite products are white vinegar and water for tile floors. She says, "If it's clean, looks good and smells nice, my customers are happy."

Kitchen and Home Interiors, located in Deerfield Beach, serves the counties of Broward, Palm Beach and north Miami-Dade. The business, whose president is Rick Argov, specializes in remodeling and renovating kitchens and bathrooms.

According to Jaime Eldridge, a certified kitchen and bath designer at Kitchen and Home Interiors, spring is a good time

to clean the refrigerator, cabinets, pantries, and under the sink. She suggests tossing all expired products. Her favorite products are CLR Bathroom & Kitchen Cleaner, a vibrating toothbrush to clean grout, and natural stone cleaner in a spray bottle to clean granite and marble countertops.

Other advice? Eldridge recommends pulling the stove and refrigerator away from the walls, where dust and debris accumulate. She says, "First dust lightbulbs and fans. This way you can vacuum up any dust that escapes."

Lupercia and Maria Almeida, natives of Brazil, started Sisters Cleaning two years ago, servicing Broward and Palm Beach counties. Their preferred cleaning products are Tilex Mold & Mildew Remover for bathrooms, Pinesol for floors and surfaces, and Pledge for furniture. Lupercia's previous career as a physical education instructor who coached high school swimming competitions gave her ideas for her current career. She applies the techniques she learned in competitive racing to her cleaning.

"I approach my work intelligently," says Lupercia. "With swimming competitions, I varied the starting times, hoping to find each swimmer's optimal time. I apply the same concept to my work. Each week I start in a different area. This enables me to work more efficiently.

"After I finish, I am tired, but happy that everything is clean. In this house, I know that everyone will sleep better tonight."

While cleaning one's home from top to bottom this season may seem like an overwhelming task, it is so worth doing. Don't forget a finishing touch. Once your house is shiny and clean and the qi is flowing freely, add some natural aromatherapy such as rose, lavender, or jasmine to bring relaxation and harmony to your home. ✦