

How to Make Washing Soda If You Can't Find It In Stores



Several of the [homemade cleaning recipes](#) here on Nature's Nurture call for the use of [washing soda](#).

But what exactly *is* washing soda? Where you can find it? And what can you do if you can't find it in stores (or online)? Let's find out.

What is washing soda?

Before I answer that question, it's important to clarify what washing soda is *not*.

Washing soda **is not** the same as baking soda. They are two different compounds and are used for completely different purposes.

Washing soda, aka *sodium carbonate* (or soda ash), is a natural cleaner and a powerful water softener. It's very basic with a **pH of 11**. The Environmental Working Group [gives it an "A"](#) on their scale, so it passes with flying colors, making it safe and non-toxic.

However, it's very **caustic** and **not edible**. Make sure to **wear gloves** if you'll be touching it with your hands, and try **not to inhale** the tiny particle dust that might fly up if you stir it too fast.

Where can you buy washing soda?

Here are a few places to look for washing soda before you decide if you need to make it at home.

Grocery or big box stores

It's usually in the **laundry aisle** next to all the laundry boosters.

Pool cleaner aisle

The brand name is AquaChem. Just make sure the only ingredient listed is sodium carbonate!

Online sources

You can also find it at [Amazon](#). Or for my fellow Canadian readers, I get mine from [Well.ca](#).

What if you can't find washing soda in stores or online?

For those who live in rural areas, or without large grocery stores, washing soda can be hard to track down.

So in my search for the best place to buy washing soda for one of my readers, I [stumbled upon this idea](#) from Penny at Penniless Parenting that you can actually turn baking soda into washing soda – simply by baking it!

As Penny explains,

The **difference between baking soda and washing soda** is water and carbon dioxide. Seriously. Baking soda's chemical makeup is NaHCO_3 (1 sodium, 1 hydrogen, 1 carbon, and 3 oxygen molecules). Washing soda's chemical makeup is Na_2CO_3 (2 sodium, 1 carbon, and 3 oxygen molecules). When baking soda is heated up to high temperatures, it breaks down to become washing soda, water steam, and carbon dioxide.

So, the steam and carbon dioxide are released during the cooking process, leaving you with... washing soda! See? Now, don't we sound all smart and science-y? 😊

How to Make Washing Soda



The process is really simple. Just heat your oven to 400 F (or 200 C), sprinkle some baking soda on a shallow pan, and bake it for about half hour, until it changes composition. You should also stir it up occasionally, just so that it bakes more evenly.



So how do you know when it changes into washing soda?

That part takes a little more work; just a closer, watchful eye. Once you know the differences between the 2 sodas, you'll be able to tell in no time.

Baking soda is powdery, crystallized, and clumps together.

Washing soda is more grainy, dull, and it doesn't clump as easily.

You can see the difference below: baking soda on the left, and washing soda on the right. See how the baking soda likes to clump together, and the washing soda is more flat and spread out?



That's it! See? I told you it was simple!

Now you can go make these non-toxic household cleaners without worrying about where to score your next box of [washing soda](#):

- [Liquid Laundry Soap](#)
- [Powdered Laundry Soap](#)
- [Dishwasher Soap Powder](#)
- [Liquid Dish Soap](#)

And a word of caution:

Washing soda should be handled with care, as it is very caustic. Always wear gloves if handling it directly, and never inhale the dust particles directly.