

Check your Kitchen Cabinets



Now that we have survived the doldrums of winter and have plants that are working us to death in the greenhouse and our secret growing areas, it behooves us to also pay a little attention to our kitchen larder supplies. I guess I go on about this every year, but the “bugs” get into our stored foods all the time! Most of the problem originates in the store from which we purchased the grains, flours, meals, and nuts that we brought home. Organic foods are not exempt. Anywhere you store materials that insects like to eat, “they will find a way” (as the “Jurassic Park” movie states) to find our stuff, feed on it and reproduce.

Probably the most common of these pests we bring into our homes is the Indian meal moth. They love everything that we do; pasta, rice, breakfast cereals, flour, jerky, nuts, - the list goes on. The moth larvae produce webbing that is easily seen in the containers of food. The most obvious indication of a real major infestation is when the 1/2” larvae are seen crawling across your ceiling to find a place to spin a cocoon and pupate. Happened to me once! Now I put all of that kind of stuff in the freezer for about a week until the ova (eggs) of the moth are dead. If you have an infestation, get rid of the offending material by freezing or placing in the oven at 300 degrees or so for a time. Then put it in the trash! You don’t want the neighborhood infested with these critters!

Many, almost microscopic, beetles also are brought into the home in our purchased food-stuffs. They represent many different species, such as grain beetles, drugstore beetles and dermestids. They will infest about the same things that the moths will attack. It is disconcerting to pour out some flour you have not used for some time and find tiny brown beetles cavorting through the white stuff! Of course, you CAN use the flour! The beetles just add a bit of protein!

Things like jerky are prone to beetle attacks as well. Dermestids, or carpet beetles and their relatives, love to feed on dried meats. I usually freeze this type of stuff for a week or so to make sure I have not brought home some unwelcome guests from the store.

I guess the bottom line here is to check everything you have that is stored every so often and look for telltale signs of pests. I have not mentioned the clothes moths, ants, silverfish, firebrats, isopods, etc. Oh, but that’s another story.

