

Kitchen Basics

No! This is not about cooking, although I really do enjoy doing that! This article is about the types of insects we see in the kitchen and larder during the year. Now that the warm weather is with us, we need to look inside our homes to see what things have invaded our kitchens and stored food so far this year.

We have bought a lot of “stuff” from the grocery store, but we have also increased our supply of pest insects that we were unaware of when we brought them home. Many of the grain products that were stored in warehouses in the U.S. and foreign countries have accumulated unwelcome insects which we bring into our homes without our knowledge.

There are many types of beetles, moths and other critters that are very willing to feed on the things we bring into our houses. They like products such as figs, dates, raisins, prunes, flour, grain products, nuts, pasta, cheese and other stored products.

Beetles that are pests include the saw-toothed grain beetle, various weevils, flour beetles and darkling beetles. Most of these are very small and almost microscopic, but, if they are in flour or light colored grains, they can easily be seen and are indicative of a definite problem.

Moth larvae are also an indication of infestation. If you have white, 3/4 inch caterpillars with black heads crawling across your ceiling, you definitely have Indian meal moths somewhere in your cabinets. Any grain products that has webbing on or in it is infected. The adult moths are about 3/4 of an inch in wingspan, gray-brown in color, and will be flying around your kitchen. Sticky traps, purchased at hardware stores and garden shops, can eliminate the breeding adults.

Taking care of the larvae is another problem. Probably the best way to guard against infestation of these insects in your kitchen or larder is to place everything that is a grain product, dried fruit or pasta that you have purchased at a store in a freezer for a few days. This will kill the eggs or larvae of any of the offending “bugs” and eliminate the need to take more serious steps in the future.

If you do have a problem that is out of control, the best recourse is to look at all of the stored dry foods you have and eliminate those that are contaminated (place any of these in a sealed plastic bag to put in the trash). You CAN microwave anything that has an infestation and use it! However, do you REALLY want that insect protein in your diet? I don't mind, but it's your choice, I guess!

