

Why cotton & linen garments feel and smell washed after dry cleaning



At worst, your cotton and linen garments have been washed.

At best, they've been wet cleaned.

But, in all likelihood, they haven't been dry cleaned as you requested. Even if the care label says "dry clean only".

What ordinary dry cleaners do

Here's what ordinary cleaners typically do to your cotton and linen garments...

They give your cottons and linens a quick "look over" for oil-based stains, such as body oil, creams and salad dressing.

If there are **no visible oil-based stains**, and they determine that your cottons and linens "can be washed or wet cleaned," they're sent directly to the washer (often, regardless of whether the care label says "dry clean" or "machine washable").

If there are visible **oil-based stains**, your cottons and linens are first tossed into a dry cleaning machine to dissolve the oils before being sent to the washer to be washed or wet cleaned and tossed into a dryer.

Now you know why

- your colors fade
- your garments feel stiff
- your garments have that fragranced, laundered smell.

Why do ordinary cleaners subject your cotton and linen garments to this treatment?

Primarily because of the fear of odors and dinginess resulting from the use of

perchloroethylene, petroleum, synthetic petroleum and formaldehyde dibutyl acetal solvents – the dry cleaning solvents used by 95% of all dry cleaners.

You see, cottons and linens are natural fibers. And, just like a sponge absorbs liquids, natural fibers absorb even the slightest odors and dinginess from dry cleaning solvent.

So, even if the dry cleaner uses (or claims to use) "pure solvent", your cotton and linen garments will still smell and look dingy when they come out of the dry cleaning machine.

There's an interesting contradiction here: Many ordinary cleaners claim that they only use "pure" dry cleaning solvent. This way they claim their dry cleaned garments are always "odor-free" and "bright".

Yet they won't risk dry cleaning your cotton and linen garments because they're afraid they'll smell and look dingy.

So how can their dry cleaning solvent be "pure" if their dry cleaning produces cotton and linen garments that are smelly and dingy?

What an extraordinary dry cleaner does

What should a dry cleaner do to your "machine washable" cotton and linen garments?

They should...

- Use pre-spotting, wet cleaning and other restoration techniques to **remove water-based stains** (instead of machine washing).
- Hang or flat dry the garments (instead of machine drying).
- Dry clean the garments to **remove any residue of oil-based stains**, enhance the intensity of the color and restore the soft texture of the garment.

And **any** dry cleaner should be able to do all this while simultaneously producing an odor-free and intensely bright garment.

Which, of course, they can't.

Which is why ordinary cleaners wash or wet clean as many of your cotton and linen garments as possible.

Even if you dislike faded, stiff, fragranced garments. Even if you specified dry clean only. Even if the care label says "dry clean only".



Stu Bloom

Founder and President of RAVE FabriCARE

RAVE FabriCARE, based in Scottsdale, Arizona, cares for fine garments, household textiles and accessories and serves clients in the USA and Canada and in other selected countries throughout the world. Stu is the author of various Position Papers, White Papers and Ebooks on these subjects, all of which are available from ravefabricare.com/downloads/free-stuff. He is an evangelist for true quality cleaning and is a contributor to and editor of True Quality Cleaning, RAVE FabriCARE's blog.



Looking for more great resources?

Check out our Resource Library for over 60 expert Position Papers (short discussions), White Papers (longer in-depth discussions) and Ebooks spanning all aspects of caring for your fine garments, household textiles and accessories.