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Cover: As this shrimp haul shows, most of what trawlers catch in their nets is not what they seek. However, even the vast quantities of unwanted species that make it onto a ship's deck offer only a superficial glimpse of the unintended damage that deep trawls wreak as they scour the ocean floor. So researchers have begun trawling themselves—for insights into how seafloor ecosystems weather each pass of these marine plows. (Photo: Elliott Norse, Marine Conservation Biology Institute)

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Letters

New uses, new concerns

I have one question about "Sponges and Sinks and Rags, Oh My!" (SN: 9/14/96, p. 172). Vinegar and lemon juice can reduce, if not eliminate, salmonella—certainly homemade mayonnaise is safe after 24 hours' refrigeration with either of these ingredients. Did Zottola use a vinegar or citric acid solution for a "follow-up, sanitizing rise"?

With a young child in the house, I'd rather have a rinse bottle of one of these out at the sink—and the smell is less offensive, too.

A. Marina Fournier
Santa Cruz, Calif.

As stated in the article, Zottola used dilute bleach as the sanitizing rinse in his work. However, researchers at the University of Nebraska have developed an alternative that employs vinegar. They put hydrogen peroxide in one spray bottle and vinegar in another. Then they

mist kitchen surfaces—cutting boards, counters, even salad greens—with each spray to kill any resident microbes, including the deadly E. coli strain that made news in Japan this summer.

For more details, see the Food for Thought feature on the Sept. 28 Science News Online at <http://www.sciencenews.org>. — J. Raloff

As a retired General Electric Co. engineer and product manager, I would like to express some concerns. It is my impression that it could be dangerous to heat items in a microwave oven that were not intended to be heated there. For instance, I think it's possible that a wooden cutting board could explode when heated for 10 minutes. Also, attempting to heat dry objects can cause damage to the appliance.

There is also the possibility of causing a fire in a microwave by heating something too long. Heating a cotton washcloth for 3 minutes could easily dry it to the point where it could burst into flame or at least char. I heat wet washcloths for no more than 25 seconds

and they come out hot enough to scald me if I'm not careful.

Finally, GE does not recommend its microwave appliances for any use other than cooking or defrosting food.

Phil Dellwo
Lynchburg, Va.

Paleontological faux pas

I was a little surprised to find a glaring error in "Fit for a King" (SN: 5/18/96, p. 316). Archaeologists do not study the bones of dinosaurs, unless the bones were somehow found and used by human beings. Archaeology is the study of man through the examination of his material remains.

This is a common misconception that professional archaeologists frequently have to correct. It is a shame that some of your readers may now perpetuate it.

John Vittands
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