



About Your Cutting Board

by
The Mountain Woodworker

Cutting boards are made from many different materials and come in different sizes and shapes. A lot of discussion abounds as to what type of material a cutting board should be made of. While general observation would show a preference for plastic cutting boards because they appear to be easier to clean than wooden ones, recent research has shown that wooden cutting boards are actually safer than the plastic or so-called anti-bacterial kind. Regardless of the findings, common sense should prevail.

Every kitchen should have at least three different cutting boards: one for raw meat, poultry and seafood; another for vegetables only; and a third one for cooked or prepared foods. The boards should never be mixed as cross contamination could occur. Although a wooden cutting board can be used for raw meat, poultry and seafood, we strongly suggest that plastic boards or mats be used for these items. Plastic boards/mats can be placed in a dishwasher and sanitized, keeping your food preparation safer.

We at The Mountain Woodworker take pride in the cutting boards we make. We select only quality hardwoods for our boards. We make both end-grain and flat-grain cutting boards.

End-Grain Cutting Boards are the best cutting boards to be found and will meet the needs of the most discerning customer. More durable than regular cutting boards, these end-grain boards look beautiful on your countertop. An end-grain is a much harder surface and has a greater tolerance for the chopping motion. These boards will keep your knives much sharper. Instead of crushing against the wood fibers the blade goes between them much like cutting into a firm brush. You will find that your blade edges last much longer.

Flat-Grain (Edge) Cutting Boards are also one of the best-selling cutting boards for the kitchen - excellent value chopping board and the perfect companion in the kitchen.

Seasoning Your Cutting Board

Before using your new cutting board and whenever the board looks “dry,” you need to season it. Seasoning a board helps prevent staining, absorption of food odors and bacteria, and mold growth on both new and older boards. Seasoning also fills the wood pores, and repel food particles, liquids, and oils.

While you can use butcher’s block oil or finish to season your board, we do not recommend it. The Mountain Woodworker recommends using **Mineral Oil** to season

your cutting boards. DO NOT use vegetable, olive, or any wood oils as they can turn rancid or give your food a flavor you do not want. Mineral oil is cheap and can easily be found at most drug stores..

If you want a “harder” finish on your board, you can add beeswax to the mineral oil at a ratio of 1/2 teaspoon of beeswax per cup of mineral oil. Add the beeswax to the mineral oil and microwave it for about 45 seconds. Beeswax can be applied to the top of your cutting board much like the old hand polishes as an option but you need to season the board first.

Pour a small amount of mineral oil onto your board and then rub it in with a soft cloth. Keep adding the oil until it is no longer absorbed into your board. After applying the oil wait 4-6 hours and then wipe off any excess oil. Re-oil your board monthly or whenever it looks dry. Some people will oil their boards every time they clean it. Although not required, this practice assures that their boards will remain well oiled and last a lifetime.

Cleaning Your Cutting Board

Your cutting board requires regular maintenance. The following guidelines will help insure that your cutting board will have a long life and help provide a safe cooking environment.

- Scrub board with hot water and soap after every use. Rinse and dry it thoroughly. **NEVER** submerge cutting boards in a sink of water or put it into a dishwasher. **NEVER** use a metal brush on your cutting board.
- To sanitize your board, use one of the following methods:
 - **Vinegar** - To disinfect and clean your cutting boards, wipe them with full-strength white vinegar after each use. The acetic acid in the vinegar is a good disinfectant, effective against such harmful bugs as E. coli, Salmonella, and Staphylococcus. Vinegar is especially good for people with chemical allergies. Keep a spray bottle of undiluted vinegar handy for easy cleaning and sanitizing.
 - **Hydrogen Peroxide** - 3% hydrogen peroxide can be used to kill bacteria. Use a paper towel to wipe the board down with vinegar, then use another paper towel to wipe it with hydrogen peroxide.
 - **Bleach** – Bleach your cutting boards with a diluted chlorine bleach solution consisting of one teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach in one quart of. Flood the surface with the solution and allow it to stand for several minutes, then rinse and air dry or pat dry with paper towels.

To eliminate garlic, onion, fish, or other smells from your cutting board:

- **Coarse salt or baking soda** - Rub the board with coarse salt or baking soda. Let stand a few minutes and wipe salt or baking soda from board, and then rinse. You may need to re-season after rinsing your cutting board/chopping block.
- **Lemon** - Another very easy technique is to rub fresh lemon juice or rub a cut lemon over the surface of the cutting board to neutralize onion and garlic odors. You may need to re-season after rinsing your cutting board/chopping block.
- **Vinegar** - Keep a spray bottle of undiluted vinegar handy for easy cleaning and sanitizing. You may need to re-season after rinsing your cutting board/chopping block.

Use a good steel scraper or spatula often when using the board. Scraping removes 75% of the moisture that builds up on a wooden cutting board. An occasional sanding will return a wooden board to a smooth luster. But never scrub a wooden board with a steel brush (a steel brush will ruff up the finish and should be avoided).

Re-Seasoning: Wooden boards need oiling or re-seasoning once a week to seal the grain against bacteria. An oil finish helps to prevent the wood from cracking or pulling apart at the seams.

Sanding: When refinishing a butcher block, you may wish to sand the surface of the wood to remove old stains, scratches and marks. When sanding out kicks and scratches, remember that if you don't sand the top evenly you will end up with "hills" and "valleys" in the top.

All cutting boards, and other food surfaces, should be kept dry when not in use. Resident bacteria survive no more than a few hours without moisture. Keep moisture of any type from standing on the block for long periods of time. Beware of moisture collecting beneath the board if you leave it on the counter. If you can, prop one end up when not using your board.

When is it time to retire cutting boards? According to the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the USDA, it is when they “become excessively worn or develop hard-to-clean grooves.” Of course, fans of wooden cutting boards also like to point out that they can be sanded or shaved to create a nice, new, smooth surface.