

## **Finishing Approaches for Woodturners**

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### **Food-Safety with Wood**

Many people are concerned about finishes on wood object being food-safe. At one time some were toxic. They contained lead. However, lead in clear oils and varnishes has been banned by Federal (US) law both as a pigment and as a dryer. All **clear** wood finishes now available are considered safe to eat off once the finish has been fully cured, which is about 30 days after application. If there is any “paint” odour, it has not finished curing. This subject is further discussed at the beginning of Section 10.

If you are still concerned, or are selling to a concerned public, consider using bare wood for foods and beverages. A possible approach: Finish the outside with a durable finishing product such as Tung oil-varnish but don't finish the inside.

In fact, tests have shown that bare wood actually inhibits the growth of bacteria like salmonella. The tests were conducted by Dean O. Cliver, PhD, when plastic rather than wood cutting boards were being recommended for use in kitchens  
<http://faculty.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/faculty/docliver/Research/cuttingboard.htm>.

Studies by other scientists have shown that those using wooden cutting boards in home kitchens were less than half as likely as average to contract salmonella, while those using plastic or glass cutting boards were about twice as likely as average to contract salmonella. (This research is mentioned in the Davis article.) Of course, this is a comparison of cutting board materials – not finishes. In this case, significant problems arose when the plastic cutting boards were scratched since the bacteria could not be removed from the scratches. On hardwood cutting boards, the bacteria were actually killed by the wood.

#### **Application of the “non-finish”:**

1. Dry sand through 600 grit
2. Moisten the surface with damp paper towel wrung dry
3. Allow to dry for several hours for the moisture to completely evaporate
4. Lightly sand with 600 grit. For higher gloss hand sand with 1000, 1500 and 2000 grits in both directions
5. Repeat steps 2, 3, 4.

6. Burnish the surface in both directions with a piece of grocery paper bag
7. Apply a coat of beeswax and polish with a soft cloth or paper towel

## Products

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Product	Supplier	Recommended by / Comments
ECCOwax	ECCO Australia	Terry Scott – Applies good sheen and better protection than just beeswax
Trewax		Russ – durable, polishes easily, fairly resistant to spotting
Conservators Wax	Lee Valley Tools	Bill Neddow -Microcrystalline wax . No fingerprints
Renaissance Wax	Craft Supplies USA	Bill Neddow -Microcrystalline wax . No fingerprints
Watco Liquid Finishing Wax		

## Advice

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**By Advice**

Suggestions welcome...