

WOODEN SPOONS

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Wood Spoons are my favorite kitchen cooking utensil. I am a Home and Career Teacher and have always stressed to my students for nearly 20 years that wooden spoons may have been around forever but they are vital in kitchens, and everyone needs at least three. I have even said that "I would die without my wooden spoon! I have always wondered... how sanitary are wood spoons? Is the wood carrying bacteria, how about those cracks can bacteria grow? Still, I have always loved them due to the fact that they do not conduct heat, they are great to use on non stick pans since they will not scratch the surface, they are fantastic to stir sauces, soups and stew. They will not pick up acidic flavors like a metal spoon which can react to some acid based foods. I love the feel of a wooden spoon in my hand. They are all natural but am I putting bacteria and germs into foods I am cooking?

Wooden Spoons can be made out many different kinds of wood including cherry, oak, walnut, birch, hickory and maple. All make nice spoons but birch is the most indestructible of all the woods because the wood itself retains the most amount of moisture and therefore resists cracking and splitting. My research has led me to find that wood/trees naturally resist bacteria. Most wooden spoons are treated with Mineral Oil before they are sold which seals the surface of the wood. Read the label, if yours have not it time you seal your spoons. The information is also valid for wooden cutting boards too.

Over time some problems may occur with wooden spoons in the kitchen. If your wooden spoon has become stained, light sanding will remove the stain. If your wooden spoon becomes rough, again use sandpaper to smooth it out. If you have used your wooden spoon with uncooked meat you may feel the

need to sanitize it by washing it in hot water with mild detergent then soak it with 50/50 vinegar and water for 5 minutes, then remove it rinse thoroughly and pat dry then seal it with mineral oil. If there is an odor that you can not seem to get out of the spoon just let it soak in 2-4 Tablespoons of Baking Soda and 2 cups of water for about 15-20 minutes, rinse thoroughly again and seal in mineral oil. In either case of odor or sanitation try Purification or Thieves, Young Living Oil rub the wood with the oil and then seal with mineral oil. If the wood begins to dry or become fuzzy, after cleaning the wooden spoon, seal it. Remember to wash then seal all wooden spoons using mineral oil after removing stains and odors, sanding or just every month is recommended. Some suggest to use a plastic bag and let the spoon soak in the oil overnight. But, be careful to only use mineral oil, other oils like vegetable oils are food based and cause bacteria growth. Sealing with mineral oil allows the wood to remain bacteria free and resist bacteria to grow. Beeswax can also be used to seal but the preferred recommendation is Mineral Oil.

With a little TLC (tender loving care) your wooden spoon can last for years and years! Just hand wash the wooden spoon in hot water using mild dish detergent, let air dry. Putting them into the dishwasher is safe, but due to the high heat the wooden spoons can dry out and crack. Once they have cracked it is a good idea to throw out the wooden spoon due to bacteria can occur in the cracks if food gets lodged into them. Better yet, recycle the wooden spoon and label something in your garden for years to come.

There are several web site which offer tips and care for wooden spoon. Some wonderful site are: cookingequipment.about.com, handcratedwoodenspoon.com and reluctantformet.com.