

Southern Turners Project Sheet

Spurtles and Spatulas



This project explains how to make simple and attractive spurtles and spatulas. Ensure all safety equipment is used appropriately.

Spurtles

Spurtles are traditional Scottish porridge stirring sticks dating from the 1500s. They are one of the simplest turning projects but provide an excellent opportunity to experiment with design and enhancement. One benefit of a spurtle is that they don't scratch the surface of non-stick cookware as long as the bottom is rounded over. The project is an excellent one for improving/refining your use of a skew chisel though other tools can be used depending on your skill levels.



The blank size is up to the individual, but to begin with, try a spindle blank of straight grained wood of approximately 25 mm square and 250 to 300 mm long.

Accurately locate and mark the centres of both ends of your blank.



Mount between centres. I prefer using a step drive centre and a ring live centre.



Use a parting tool to form a groove approximately 5 to 10 mm from each end of the blank. Diameter is not important as long as the groove is down to round.

Use a skew chisel or spindle gouge to reduce the blank to a cylinder.



Mark the length of the handle. In this case it is approximately 100 mm.

Turn the handle to your chosen design. The traditional spurtle is topped with a Scots thistle (shown in photo of finished spurtle).



Blend the stirring end to the handle. Sand all surfaces

Round over the ends of the spurtle. With practice you should be able to reduce both diameters to approximately 2 mm or less without it coming off the lathe.



Remove the spurtle from the lathe.

Use a hand saw or sharp knife to remove the stubs and hand sand to blend in with the curve.

Leave raw or apply a foodsafe finish.

Your finished spurtle may look something like this!

Spatulas

The blank size is up to the individual, but to begin with, try a spindle blank of straight grained wood of approximately 30 to 35 mm thick by 55 to 75 mm wide and 250 to 300 mm long.



Mark points 4 mm from the opposite edges of the narrow face of the blank and draw a line to connect them as shown in the adjacent photograph.



Use a bandaw or other suitable saw to make two blanks.



Accurately mark the centre of the thickest end of the blank. Use two pieces of scrap timber to protect the thin end of the blank and mount with the thin end centred in a suitable chuck and the thick end at the tailstock supported by a live centre.

Mark the length of the blade and a waste section approximately 100 from the tailstock end of the blank. Use a parting tool to reduce the waste to round and slightly less in diameter than the final thickness of the handle.



Use a skew or spindle gouge to turn the handle to round. The diameter of the handle where it meets the blade should be less than a mm less than the maximum thickness of the blade.

Beads, coves, burnt lines or other embellishments can be added at this time. Sand to a suitable finish. I find 240 grit sufficient for softwoods and 320 grit fine for hardwoods.

Use a skew or spindle gouge to round over the end of the handle and sand. Use a hand saw or craft knife to part off. Hand sand the nib.

Sand the blade on a linisher, belt sander or use another suitable method until smooth and of suitable thickness and shape. Leave raw or use a foodsafe finish. I prefer grape seed oil as it doesn't go rancid.

Spartles and spatulars are great presents for family and friends and are quick, cheap and easy to make..