

Make Your Own Kitchen Utensils

Spatulas and Spurtles

Demo by Rusty Myers

Spurtle: Basically it is a stirring stick. Shaped to fit in the hand and stir thick sauces, stews and, of course, chili.

Spatula: Flat bladed utensil, good for browning meat and other items in non-stick cookware.

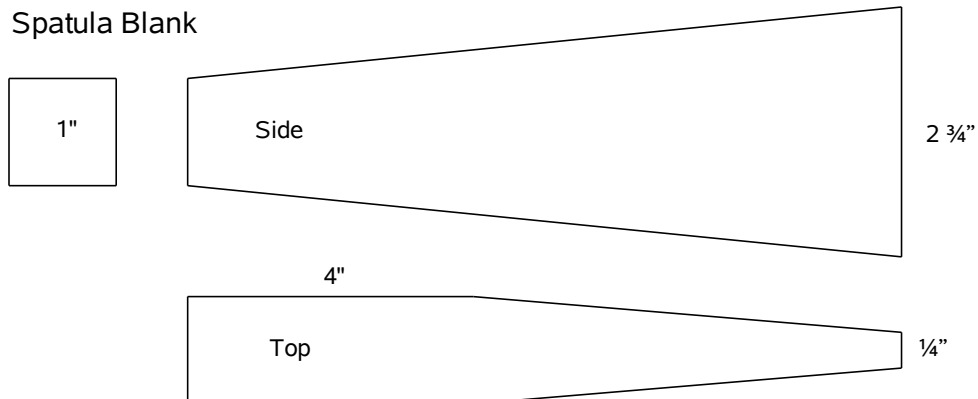
These projects are excellent for practicing spindle turning and increasing tool control. They can be done with either gouges or skew chisels, or a combination of both.

Blank sizes: Spurtle is 1" x 1" x 12"-16" Spatula is the same 12"-16" length, but a 1" x 1" section 4" long at the handle end, tapering to $\frac{1}{4}$ " x $2\frac{3}{4}$ " at the blade end.

Spurtle Blank



Spatula Blank



I typically make the blanks 14" long which gives a finished tool around 13" long. I find 16" to be about as long as you would want to go. For a mini lathe, go with what fits.

Keys for success:

1. The right wood. Straight grained, close pored (grained), moderately stiff and stable. Mesquite and Maple are good. Cherry and Pecan also work. Red Oak and Walnut are too open pored (food gets into the pores). White Oak flexes a lot in my experience, as does Cedar Elm. My personal choice is Mesquite, specially for chili.
2. Sharp tools. Sorry, that's a whole other demo, but keep 'em sharp and it will make everything easier.
3. Light tool pressure. Rub the bevel really means glide the bevel. Less rubbing means less vibration. Move the tool in the direction of cut, not into the wood.
4. Steady the wood. Use your fingers on the backside to dampen vibrations. Hot fingers means too much pressure.

Helpful Hints:

1. A long tool rest helps. Longer than the stock means no moving the rest and makes it easy to get nice flowing lines.
2. Remove center point. If possible, remove the center point of your tail center when turning the spatula. This will keep the point from causing splits.
3. Stop and sand with the grain. Stop the lathe between grits and make a couple of quick passes with the grain, rotating the piece by hand. This eliminates the circular sanding pattern on the pieces.
4. Replace the bead. Try turning the bead between the handle and shaft. If it doesn't work out, try v-grooves. But try first or you will never get good at them.
5. Safety Drive Center. Using a dead cup center (sold by Oneway and others as a safety drive) means fewer and more gentle catches and less damaged work.
6. Lower pressure between centers. This keeps the wood from bowing and it will be much easier to turn.

Reference:

To give credit where credit is due, I learned this from the Richard Raffan book "Turning Projects". He also has a segment of turning these in his video of the same name. I've turned a lot of these since first reading about it and have retained much of his technique, but you will get a slightly different perspective by watching the video. Plus it's neat to see him break a spatula...