



# How to Clean Wooden Cutting Boards

Two Methods: [Keeping Your Cutting Board Clean](#) [Sanitizing Your Cutting Board](#)

Wooden cutting boards are a beautiful and useful tool to have on hand in your kitchen. Not only are they attractive, they're quite safe: they naturally harbor less bacteria than their plastic counterparts.<sup>[1]</sup> Though your wooden cutting board may be surprisingly resistant to germs, it's still safest to keep it clean, and sanitize it once in a while! Here's how to do it.

Method  
1

## Keeping Your Cutting Board Clean

**1 Choose a cutting board made of hard wood.** Cutting boards made of soft woods split more easily, and bacteria grow in the cuts a knife leaves behind. If you pick a cutting board made of a harder wood, like maple, walnut, or cherry, it will resist being cracked or nicked. This will keep it safe and looking good for a long time.<sup>[2]</sup>

**2 Consider seasoning it with mineral oil before use.** Wood is a natural material, and when it loses moisture, it can dull--or, worst case scenario, split! Keep it sealed and seasoned with a light coating of mineral oil. Warm a small amount of oil in your hands, and then spread it on the surface of the cutting board. Let it sit for a few minutes, then wipe off with a clean rag or paper towel. Then flip over the cutting board and season the other side too.

- You should season your cutting board about once a month, and every time you sanitize it.
- Don't use natural oils to seal the wood, because they can go bad. Mineral oil should do the trick.

**3 Practice good food safety.** Because wooden cutting boards can't be run through the dishwasher, many sources recommend not using them for high-risk foods. Whether you choose to use all-wooden, or a combination of wooden and plastic, cutting boards in your kitchen, it's important to use different cutting boards for different foods.<sup>[3]</sup>

- A plastic or well-seasoned wooden cutting board should be used for high-risk foods, including raw meat, poultry, seafood, and tofu.
- A separate cutting board should be used for breads, cooked meats, cheese, fermented soy (like tempeh) and washed fruits and vegetables.
- Both boards should be cleaned after use, and it's important not to mix them up. Otherwise, you run the risk of cross-contamination.<sup>[4]</sup>

**4 Wipe down your cutting board after use.** Every time you use your cutting board, rinse it with hot, soapy water, then with plain water. Dry with a rag or paper towel, or air-dry with the cutting board on its side. This exposes both sides of the cutting board to the air and allows gravity to drain excess water.<sup>[5]</sup>

**5 Deodorize and spot-treat your cutting board once a week.** When you're tidying up your kitchen, you can also give your cutting board a more intense cleaning with some readily-available ingredients. This is especially helpful if you've noticed your board getting a little smelly or stained.

- If you notice your cutting board is clinging on to the scents of strong foods, vinegar can help! Soak a paper towel in white vinegar, then wipe it across the surface of the cutting board. This will neutralize the odors without making the wood smell like vinegar in the long term.<sup>[6]</sup>
- Another time-honored trick is sprinkling salt over the cutting board's surface while it's still wet. The salt draws out moisture trapped in the board's cracks, along with any bacteria that might be hiding.<sup>[7]</sup>
- Stains can be dealt with using science-fair volcano ingredients, too. Try sprinkling baking soda over the discolored area, then scrub the baking soda into the wood using half a lemon. Afterwards, wash and dry the board.<sup>[8]</sup>

**Method**  
**2**

## Sanitizing Your Cutting Board

- 1 Sanitize your cutting board once a month.** Even if you clean your cutting board after each use, it's important to give it a more intense treatment every once in a while. A bleach solution will kill more ingrained germs than simple soap and water can. This deep clean is especially important if you use your wooden cutting board for meat, poultry, or other high-risk foods.
- 2 Make sure your cutting board is clean and dry.** If it isn't, scrub it down with hot, soapy water, then rinse with a wet paper towel or rag. Pat dry with paper towels or a clean rag, or air-dry with the cutting board on its side. You don't want there to be any extra food on the board while you're trying to sanitize it.
- 3 Create a cleaning solution.** In a spray bottle, combine 1 teaspoon liquid bleach with one quart of water. Make sure the cap is firmly on the bottle, then give it a good shake to make sure the ingredients are evenly combined.<sup>[9]</sup>
  - If you don't have an ammonium-based bleach, or are scared to use it near food, you can use hydrogen peroxide instead. A pre-mixed 3% solution works well.<sup>[10]</sup>
- 4 Disinfect the cutting board.** Use the spray bottle to distribute a thin layer of the solution over the cutting board's surface. Allow it to sit for ten minutes or so, then rinse the cutting board's surface under running water. Be careful not to get any of the bleach onto your clothes or kitchen surfaces. Shake off any excess water, then repeat on the other side.
  - If you're using hydrogen peroxide instead of a bleach solution, pour a little onto a paper towel and carefully wipe it over the surface of the cutting board instead. Allow to sit, then rinse.<sup>[11]</sup>
- 5 Pour a little white vinegar onto a paper towel, then wipe the surface of the cutting board.** This step is optional, but will get the board extra clean and deodorized. Afterwards, set the cutting board on its side to dry.<sup>[12]</sup>
- 6 Re-season the cutting board.** Bleach can dry out a natural material like wood, but a fresh coat of oil can help prevent this. Simply rub a small amount of mineral oil across the surface of the cutting board and let it soak in for a few minutes, then wipe up any excess with a rag or paper towel.

### Tips

- If your wooden cutting board constantly smells off, or has deep cracks or visible mold, it's time to replace it.
- Keeping your knives sharp can prevent your cutting board from sustaining damage. Conversely, a cutting board in nice condition will help protect your knives.

### Warnings

- A paste of baking soda and water may discolor the board if used all over.
- Do not immerse a wooden cutting board in water or run it through the dishwasher. The board will soak up water and split when it dries.

### Things You'll Need

- Two or more cutting boards
- Spray bottle
- Bleach
- Water
- Dish soap

- White vinegar
- Lemon cut in half
- Salt
- Baking soda
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Mineral oil or wax
- Clean rags or paper towels

### Sources and Citations

1. <http://faculty.vetmed.ucdavis.edu/faculty/docliver/Research/cuttingboard.htm>
2. <https://news.ncsu.edu/2014/09/cutting-boards-food-safety/>
3. <http://www.fsis.usda.gov/wps/portal/fsis/topics/food-safety-education/get-answers/food-safety-fact-sheets/safe-food-handling/cutting-boards-and-food-safety>

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