

KITCHEN COUNTER TOP CARE

WHERE TO USE YOUR BUTCHER BLOCKS

Certainly the ultimate kitchen will have natural butcher block counter tops throughout. However, any design and decor can be enhanced by the addition of this gorgeous, yet useful, surface. Many home chefs' appreciate a built-in cutting surface next to their cooktop. A small section is also often used over the built-in dishwasher. A butcher block island under a hanging pot rack makes a perfect prep area, or you may want to add the warmth and beauty of butcher block as a raised breakfast bar with stools.

SELECTION OF FINISH

Penetrating Oil: If you wish to use your butcher block top as a cutting surface, this is the only finish to purchase. Just like cutting boards and butcher blocks, the natural wood surface is protected by oil, which is actually absorbed into the fibers. It is advisable to periodically re-oil your butcher block tops to preserve their beauty and durability. If, after heavy usage, you wish to remove cut marks, just sand off the top and re-oil. It will look like new.

Varnique: This beautiful semi-gloss finish is virtually maintenance free. It is impervious to most household chemicals. Cleans up easily with mild soap and water. The fine furniture look makes it the choice for kitchen island bars and eating counters. Cuts into the finish should be resealed immediately to prevent the exposed wood from absorbing moisture.

CUTTING

Sink Installation and Other Cutting Alterations: Cutting a butcher block top exposes unprotected hardwood. This needs to be refinished immediately. Failure to do so could lead to cracking of the top. Once you have made a cutout in the top, you should coat the exposed area with a silicon acrylic clear caulk. Caulk is available at most hardware stores. The caulk should be spread evenly with a putty knife the full thickness of the cut portion. Caulk should also be spread one inch wide around the face side of the cutout perimeter. The bottom side of the top should have a three inch wide spread of caulk around the cutout perimeter. Allow caulk to dry. Run a bead of caulk around perimeter of cutout where sink ring will rest. Once sink and ring are in place, wipe off excess caulk squeeze out from ring with a damp cloth. For other concealed cutting alterations apply caulk to unprotected area of cutout only. For areas above dishwashers apply caulk to bottom side of counter top that is overhung from the front of the dishwasher. The caulk should be applied with a putty knife and spread three inches past the units width on either side. All exposed edges that have been altered should be refinished w/oil.

INSTALLING COUNTER TOP

During times of high humidity a butcher block tends to absorb moisture, which will cause it to expand in width. During low humidity (winter months) it will contract back to its original dimension. When installing a butcher block, allowances need to be made for these seasonal changes. Some cabinet manufacturers slot the top mounting bolt holes. If your cabinets have this feature, be sure the mounting bolts are centered in the slot to allow for both expansion and contraction. If the wood or metal mounting brackets are not slotted, allowance can be made by drilling the hole through the counter approximately 3/8" oversized, and using a washer under the head of the bolts, as shown in figure 1. Attach counter top to counter base using 1/4" lag bolts. The length will vary on the application, but a good rule of thumb is to use a bolt long enough to penetrate one half the top's thickness. Use one bolt per foot to attach the top widthwise. Use a minimum of four bolts on both ends. Use one bolt per every two feet to attach the length on both sides.

WARPING

Warping of butcher block occasionally occurs, if one surface expands at a greater rate than the other side. Since the moisture content of the wood used in producing butcher block counter tops is tightly controlled, a warped top can be easily corrected. Placing the block onto your cabinet base, it can be drawn down to a flat condition by using 3 or 4 bolts across the width. (See figure 2.)

On an oiled butcher block top the warped condition can also be corrected by covering the convex side with mystery oil and plastic, and then rubbing oil into the concave side of the board repeatedly. This evens out the moisture content of the counter top, and will bring it back to its original flat condition.

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SPLITS

Minor splits may occur at the ends of your butcher block top, if it was cut for installation and the end not properly resealed. If you notice this condition, the cracks should be immediately filled with matching color wood filler, sanded smooth, and refinished with mineral oil.

Figure 1.

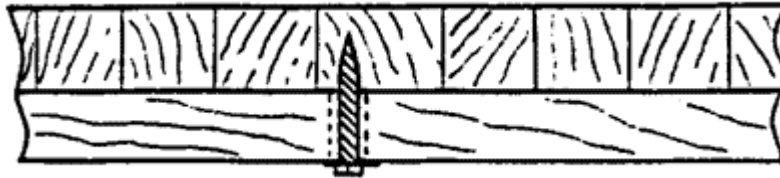


Figure 2.

