

SPURTLES AND SPUDDLES An ideal gift from your shop.

Demo for the Maine Woodturners (with Mike Chase) 3-18-09 by Peter McCrea

Spurtles are medieval kitchen tools that evolved in Scotland for stirring porridge. An early form had a chisel-shaped end and is referred to as a spuddle. Both are simple spindle turnings which will be treasured by family and friends alike.

My handle design comes from Raffan, who has a good eye for form and ergonomics. Start with a 14" long hardwood blank, 7/8" square. Cherry, walnut and maple are good woods for this use. Turn 3/4" diameter tenons one inch long on both ends as one can reverse the piece if required. With a story stick, lay out the pattern after the blank has been turned round. I prefer a collet chuck, but #1 jaws in a scroll chuck will work. The handle end is nearest the headstock. After defining the 7/16" diameter on the shaft side of the large bead, create the tapered shaft, from the tailstock toward the bead. When vibration occurs try using a small finger on the wood, along with a light cut from the roughing gouge.

Next, do the handle-defining 7/16" parting cuts, and create the handle profile. Turn the bead and the top of the handle, leaving the decorative small top bead for later. Add light v-grooves and wire-burn marks adjacent to the bead. Create the round stirrer end, leaving 1/4" diameter at the tailstock end. Sand all completed surfaces 150/220/400. Part the stirrer end with a skew and sand the free end, eliminating all cavities which might collect food particles. Install a shop-made wood "tailstock jamchuck" which has been made to screw on to (Oneway) or slide over (other mfg) the rotating tailstock point and has a cavity to accept the 3/4" stirrer end. With the spuddle now captive again, turn the top bead and sand it. Part with a small skew. Finish can be applied in the lathe or later. Mineral or walnut oil would be a good choice of finish.

The steps for the spuddle are identical at the handle end, but the shaft is a constant 7/16" diameter from the large bead to a flared 3/4" cone for the last 2".

The chisel form is later achieved on a stationary belt sander, working toward a drawn centerline, then hand sanding 150/220. Enjoy your new kitchen tools!

