

How to make a wooden spoon, the viking way

by [morfmir](#) on August 4, 2008

Table of Contents

intro: How to make a wooden spoon, the viking way	2
step 1: All my tools	2
step 2: the tools I use.	3
step 3: The wood	3
step 4: Splitting the log	4
step 5: cut the rougt shape of the spoon with the axe.	6
step 6: Using knives to finish the shaping.	11
step 7: Sanding	13
Video	13
step 8: oil and wax	16
step 9: The spoon is complete	17
step 10: Other sizes and designs of spoons	17
Related Instructables	19
Advertisements	19
Make Magazine Special Offer	19
Comments	19

intro: How to make a wooden spoon, the viking way

I will show you how to make a wooden spoon out of green applewood. Using only my handmade viking tools.



step 1: All my tools

This is an overview of all my tools.



Image Notes

1. A selection of tools that I use everyday.

step 2: the tools I use.

This is the tools you need to make a spoon. My tools are hand forged reconstructions of viking tools.

You need:

Axe: any small hand axe will do fine. It just needs to be sharp. A good hand axe weighs around 500-600g

hammer: you need a heavy hammer. If it is to small it will not have enough force to split the wood.

wedge: A heavy iron wedge made for splitting firewood will work fine. Alternatively use a old axe and hammer it through the log. Don't use you good axe for that. You ruin the axe that way.

Knife: a small sharp knife will do.

Spoon knife: You **need** a spoonknife, in my book there are no alternatives. You will probably not find it in you local hardwarestore, but you can buy it online. The best are handforged made by S. DjÄrv but you can also go after the cheap ones made by Frost Sweden.

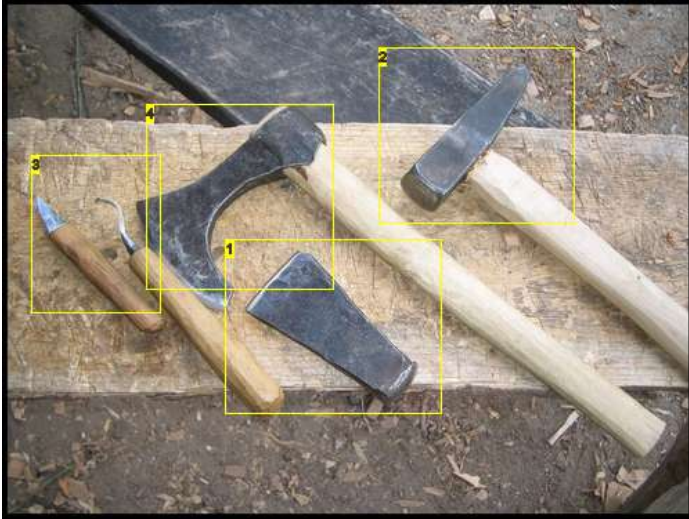


Image Notes

1. wedge
2. hammer
3. knives, normal knife and spoon knife.
4. axe

Image Notes

1. Handforged spoonknife
2. Small handforged knife.

step 3: The wood

You need a log of wood. It needs to be 10-15 cm longer than the spoon you want to make. It needs to be newly cut. The wood you don't use right away you can leave it some high grass. Then it will be wet and workable for 2-4 weeks.

All wood can be used, but fruit tree are best. For this spoon I'm using applewood. That's a very good wood for spoonmaking. It's hard and very durable in use. And it looks nice with the all white grains.



Image Notes

1. This log makes 4-8 spoons depending on the size of them.



Image Notes

1. This log are newly cut.

step 4: Splitting the log

Now you need the hammer and wedge. Split the log into 4 triangular pieces.



Image Notes

1. Start by splitting the log down the middle. If you see a crack in the log, use the crack as a guide to where to split it.







step 5: cut the rougt shape of the spoon with the axe.

I use a piece of charcoal to draw the shape of the spoon. I cut the rough shape of the spoon as close to the drawing as possible. That way I have less work to do with the knife. When I work in greenwood I have to work fast so the wood don't dry and crack. If I need to leave the wood or I want to finish it later, I can place it in a bucket of water or in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.



Image Notes

1. this is the front of the log. I just removed the bark. And drew a center line.

Image Notes

1. This is the side of the log. Here I draw the shape of the spoon.



Image Notes

1. you can see the shape and angle of the spoonhandle. It has to be just right so the spoon will have the right feel when it is finished.

Image Notes

1. With the axe I remove the wood from the front of the log.



Image Notes

1. now I remove the wood from the back of the spoon.





Image Notes

1. When the wood has the right thickness I draw the shape of the spoon on the front of the log.

Image Notes

1. First I remove from the head, and then from the handle.



Image Notes

1. keep it as close to the line as possible.



Image Notes

1. now the spoon has the rough shape on all sides.



Image Notes

1. now cut the back of the spoon head. Try to make it as exactly inverted on both sides as possible.

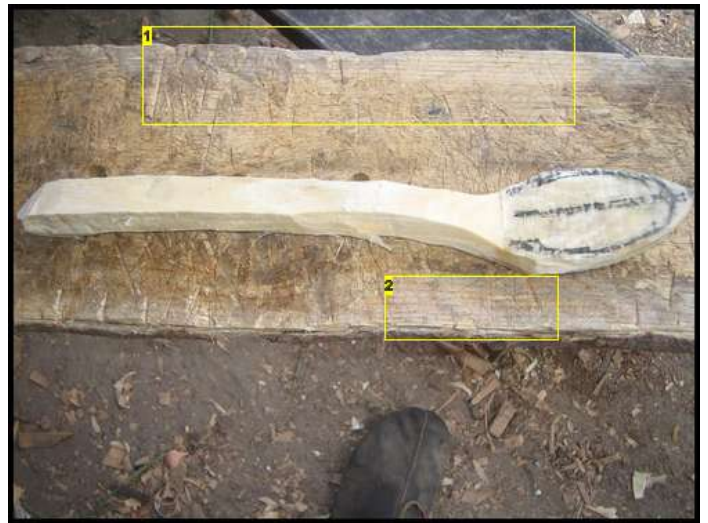


Image Notes

1. Now your finished with the axe.
2. front view

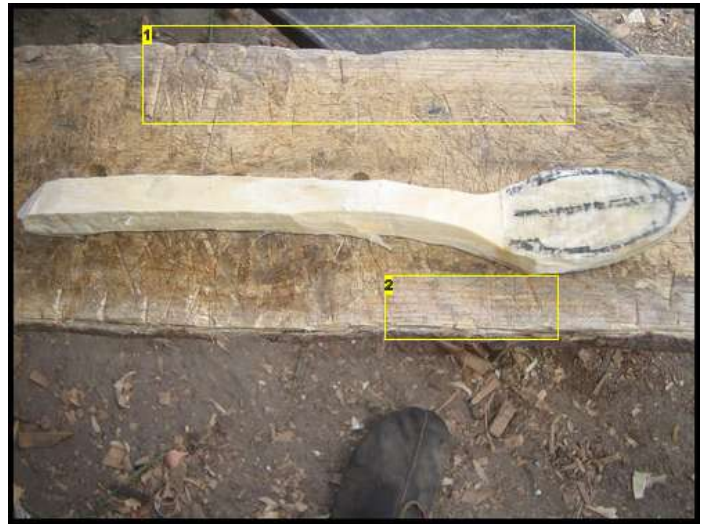
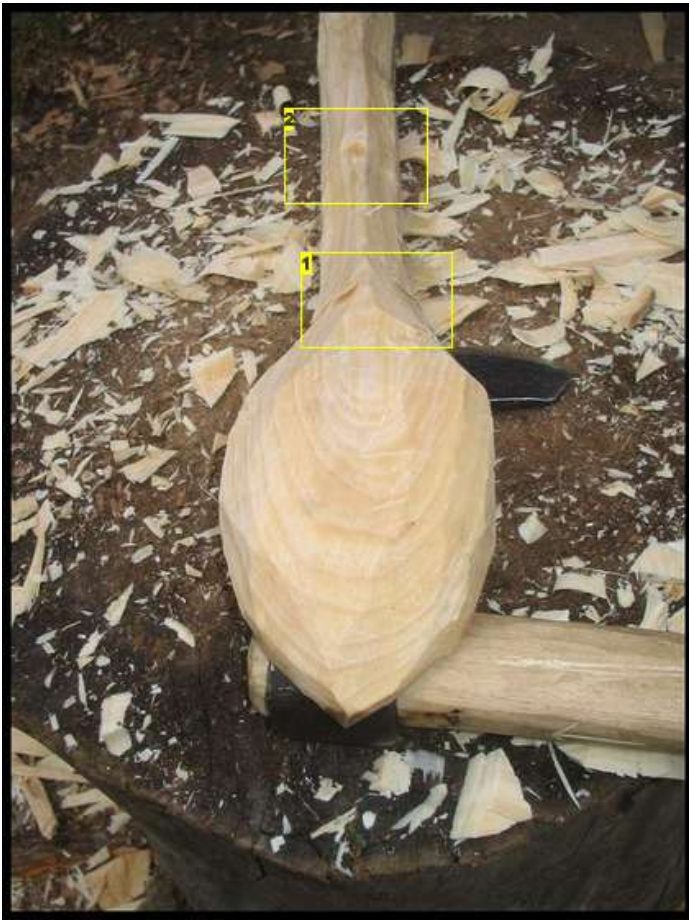


Image Notes

1. Watch out for this area, if you make it too thin the spoon will break.
2. Note the triangular shape of the handle. That gives it more strength.

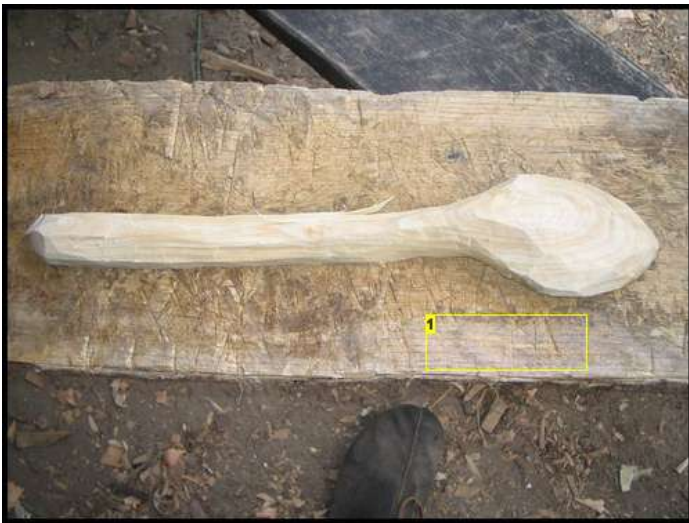


Image Notes

1. back view

step 6: Using knives to finish the shaping.

With a knife I finish shaping the outside of the spoon. When it is smooth I make the bowl with a spoon knife. The last thing I make is the carving at the end of the handle.



Image Notes

1. now I start carving the bowl.

Image Notes

1. I keep the triangular shape of the handle.
2. Try to make it as smooth as possible with the knife. It will save you a lot of work when sanding the spoon later.



Image Notes

1. The thickness of the spoon needs to be very even. Or else it will crack while drying or later when used. The thinner you make the spoon the more elegant it will look.
2. I make the spoon 2-3 mm thick.

Image Notes

1. I make this triangular shape here. For one it looks nice, and it makes this fragile part of the spoon stronger.



Image Notes

1. In the rough shaping of the spoon I left the end of the handle thick. That is to make room for the end carving.



Image Notes

1. The curl looks nice and it prevents the spoon from falling into the pot when in use.

Image Notes

1. this twist are a typical way of ending a viking spoon.



Image Notes
1. finished front.

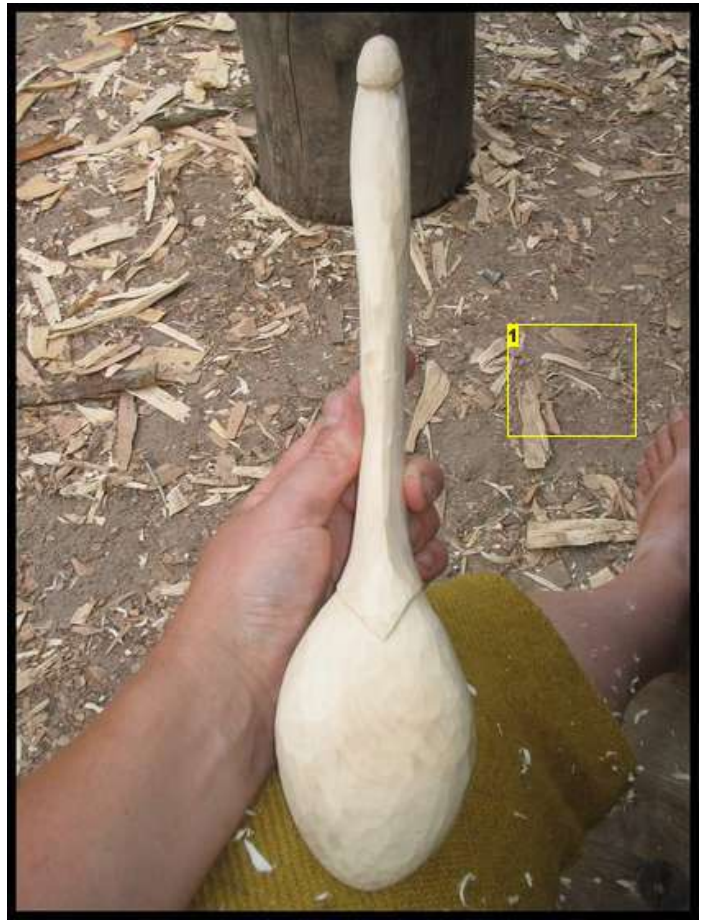


Image Notes
1. finished back

step 7: Sanding

The spoon needs to be all dry before I start sanding it. It takes 3-5 days depending on the weather. I start with sandpaper grain 100, then 180, 240 and 400. If I'm doing it the real viking way I'm only using the special kind of horsetail called "Skavgraes" Sand outside or wear dust mask, or both.



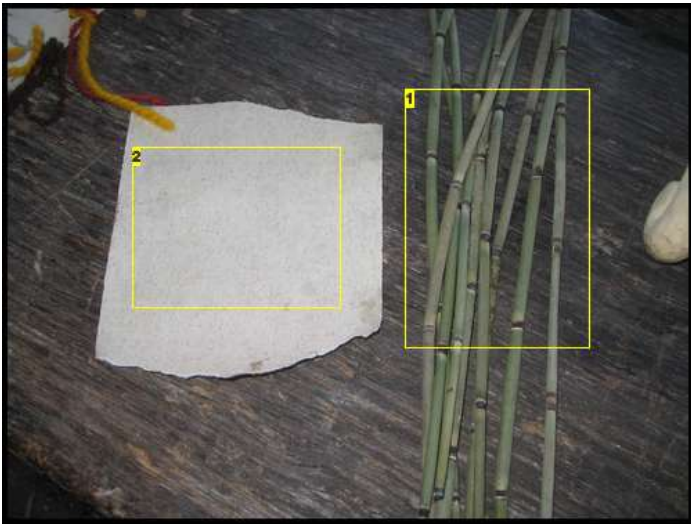


Image Notes

1. Skavgræs=Equisetum hyemale=horsetail
2. Normal sandpaper.



Image Notes

1. The way to use skavgræs. Pack it in a small bundle.

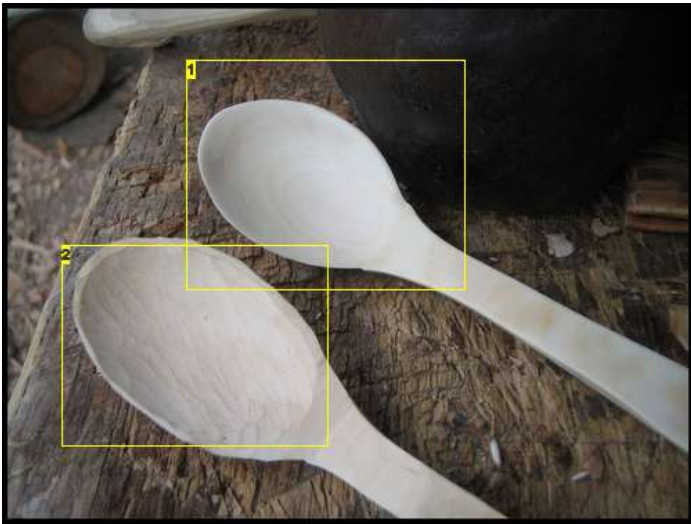


Image Notes
1. After sanding.
2. before sanding.



Image Notes
1. Finished sanding. Front view.



Image Notes

1. Finished sanding. Side view.

step 8: oil and wax

I use linseed oil. Put on a thick layer, let it sit for a few hours then remove the remaining with towel paper. Let it dry to the next day, and then you can add wax. I only use wax when I'm making spoons for sale on vikings markets. The wax protects the spoon from dirty fingers but will be washed of when you wash it the first time.



Image Notes

1. This is another spoon. Polished with beeswax.

Image Notes

1. linseed oil.

step 9: The spoon is complete

Now the spoon is completed. And ready for the kitchen. When the spoon have been washed a few times the wood fibers can rise and you need to sand it lightly with fine sandpaper (400)



step 10: Other sizes and designs of spoons

Here you can see some other spoons I have made lately.



Image Notes

1. Flat spoon. Made from red alder.



Image Notes

1. Made from cherry wood.



Image Notes

1. look at the beautiful color patten. The white outer and the red inner core.



Image Notes

1. Made from the other side of the apple wood.



Image Notes

1. A small eating spoon made from apple wood.



Image Notes

1. Apple wood.

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Comments

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Erfunden says:

Apr 7, 2009. 3:59 PM [REPLY](#)

I read this instructable when it was first published and thought it sounded like fun. I got to try it out last week when I was given a set of carving knives.

I didn't have a hatchet so I gave the spoon it's rough shape with a Japanese hand saw and I didn't have a spooning knife so I used a "v" shaped chisel to dig out the bowl. The sawing was the longest, hardest part.

Anyway, here's my spoon, made from basswood and finished in mineral oil.



morfmir says:

Apr 7, 2009. 10:33 PM [REPLY](#)

What a great spoon. It looks very nice. Special considered that you did not have the best tools for the job.

Basswood are a good choice for a spoon. Not as hard and durable as apple or cherry, but easy to work and easy to sand to a smooth surface. I use basswood for dough bowls.

I don't know what you plan to use the spoon for, but it will be best as a serving spoon. Because of the pointy almond shape it is not so suitable for stirring.

All in all a beautiful spoon that you can be very proud of.

/Thomas



Erfunden says:

Apr 10, 2009. 12:01 PM [REPLY](#)

Thank you. I can't wait to make another one!

Is a hatchet a lot faster than an axe? Making another spoon would be more fun if I could get to the carving part faster.



morfmir says:

Apr 10, 2009. 1:30 PM [REPLY](#)

I don't know the difference of an axe and a hatchet. In my book it is just two words for the same thing. Am I wrong? What will you call the axe I use?

/Thomas



zzoe says:

Apr 24, 2009. 1:01 PM [REPLY](#)

A hatchet is smaller, and light enough to be used one-handed if you 'choke up' on the handle to just below the head. Hatchets are used for light chopping and splitting, mostly, and some carving.

An axe is larger, a heavier and generally two-handed beast. Primarily for felling medium to large trees, and not delicate enough for finer or smaller work.

I hope that helps.

P.S. Do you (and did the Vikings) ever use a froe for splitting the log into billets along the grain?



morfmir says:

Apr 25, 2009. 2:49 AM [REPLY](#)

Thanks for the explanation of the difference between an axe and a hatchet.

I sometimes use a froe for splitting. But I'm not sure if the Vikings use it. I know they used wedges like mine. So when I'm working in our historical environment I only use wedges. But it is plausible that the Vikings used a froe.

/Thomas



zzoe says:
Thanks

Apr 25, 2009. 6:47 AM [REPLY](#)



Erfunden says:
You are absolutely right, Thomas. An axe and a hatchet are the same in my book too.
I meant to ask, is a hatchet alot faster than a saw?

Apr 11, 2009. 9:39 PM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:
That of course depends on your skills and practise with a axe. But with some practise the axe are a lot faster, and it give a lot more possibilitys to form the spoon in more round and organic forms. And in some harder wood with curled grains like juniper and hawthorn, witch make great spoons, you feel the grains while using the axe, and in that way you know better how to carve the fin details with the knife.

Apr 12, 2009. 1:03 AM [REPLY](#)

/Thomas



zzoe says:
Beautiful work, and beautiful tools as well. Do you forge your own tools? Excellent work all around, including the inst'able itself.
A favorite, and five well earned stars.
Thanks!

Apr 24, 2009. 12:51 PM [REPLY](#)



Jason_Giddens says:
All hand made handles... Very nice

Apr 23, 2009. 9:42 PM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:
:-) All my handles are made from hassel wood. With the hand forged axes the hole are all a little different. So the handle has to be hand made individually for every axe.

Apr 23, 2009. 10:52 PM [REPLY](#)

/Thomas



MKohen says:
Ok. You are officially awesome. The vikings were straight thugs, and that spoon looks great. I'll be making me one...

Apr 14, 2009. 6:09 PM [REPLY](#)



galenorama says:
That is incredible! Fantastic job!

Mar 31, 2009. 6:21 PM [REPLY](#)



captaincoolness55 says:
great job man! :D

Mar 22, 2009. 4:02 AM [REPLY](#)



Lithium Rain says:
This looks terrific! I'm going to make my own wooden spoon!

Mar 17, 2009. 8:27 AM [REPLY](#)



alex-sharetskiy says:
after about 1/2 year of use, it should get all moldy, right?

Mar 15, 2009. 2:58 PM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:
no. Not if you take good care of it. Wash it and clean it after use and store it in a dry place. No mold will come to it. The spoon will become more dull and the colors will fate but it will not become moldy.

Mar 15, 2009. 11:49 PM [REPLY](#)

/Thomas



alex-sharetskiy says:
we have a bunch of spatulas that are wooden, and they started to turn dark in color at the 'buissness end' the tip

Mar 16, 2009. 6:45 AM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:
Maybe that is because of the heat. My spoons don't turn black.

Mar 16, 2009. 9:19 AM [REPLY](#)

/Thomas



michael J. caboose says:
vikings are awesome

Mar 10, 2009. 4:42 PM [REPLY](#)



jtpoutdoor says:
cool spoon, I take it you work at Lejre? I went there some years ago researching for my degree- loved it great stuff you guys do there. Have you ever tried sourcing any Karelian birch from Finland- I think you'd enjoy working with it, very cool markings like walnut. Your woodworking tools are not dissimilar to those still used today in Finland for traditional log house and boat building.

Dec 26, 2008. 1:17 PM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:
Thanks. Yes I'm working as viking in Lejre. In the summer as a teacher and in the winter I'm making reconstructions. My next big project is to make log boats for the bonfire wally area.
Actually, a few years ago I was in Finland. On the trip I took some birch with me home. I use it for knifehandles. I can also buy it her i Denmark but it is rather expensive and of cause it is dry . I wouth love to have fresh supply of that kind of birch, for woodturning and kuksa carving.

Dec 27, 2008. 5:42 AM [REPLY](#)

/Thomas



jtpoutdoor says:
Hi Thomas
Try getting in touch with Kurunnoremalimetsaoppilaitos (Kuru Forest training college) in Finland- that's where I was, they (used) to do courses in house and boat building and the guy who took the courses (Martti) was into knife making - it's a long time ago since I was there but someone mioght be able to point you in the direction of a source?

Mar 3, 2009. 12:09 PM [REPLY](#)



mg0930mg says:
Those knives, are amazing looking.

Mar 2, 2009. 6:07 PM [REPLY](#)



wenpherd says:
supurb!

Mar 2, 2009. 5:38 PM [REPLY](#)



mmh says:
Very nice work. I like your tool collection too. Did you make your spoke shaves? I make canes out of domestic & exotic woods so I can appreciate your effort in using hand tools only. (I use both power & hand tools) Working with wood by hand takes a lot of patience and work. Please show us more projects!

Aug 21, 2008. 9:23 PM [REPLY](#)



spoonmann says:
What kind of wood is the top of that cane made out of ?
osagemann@yahoo.com thanks! John

Mar 2, 2009. 4:57 PM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:

Thanks. I made some of my spoke shaves but not all.

What a beautiful cane, what wood is it?

Do you steam bend canes?

Aug 21, 2008. 10:53 PM [REPLY](#)



mmh says:

Gallery MH Thank you. The cane handle is made of Quilted Maple and the shaft of Claro Black Walnut (right handed Harrison style). I'm not steam bending wood at this time, as it requires more equipment & room! I'm designing ergonomic styles that are comfortable, functional and stylish. My goal is to create functional art and I'm having fun learning wood working techniques and combining different woods that I've collected.

What other Viking items have you created? I've seen a fellow in Hawaii carve a canoe out of Koa. I've paddled in one, they weigh around 600 lbs. or more. We had to haul it by hand from the beach to the shore every day of practice - Waikiki Surf Club, women's canoe team.

Aug 22, 2008. 7:54 AM [REPLY](#)



morfmir says:

I like your canes, they look very nice and ergonomic.

I have made chests, bows, shields, stols, tables, knives and a lot of other small things.

It is also my responsibility to repair all kinds of wooden items. And to make what the research people ask for. Like this stick for making wool.

This winter I hope to make 6-10 boats like the ones in this video.

Aug 22, 2008. 12:21 PM [REPLY](#)

It depends on if the center can find the money to buy the wood.



BgRdDragon says:

you've made have made chests, bows, shields, stoles, tables, knives !?!?

OK I really think you should put some more Instructables up! from looking at the stuff u already made a think you would do nicely with the shields and your viking axe up they look really well made a cool!

Apr 23, 2009. 6:03 PM [REPLY](#)



laurenmendoza says:

these spoons are really nice. what about any other ways of finishing, so it would stay smooth and not have to be sanded later on? I'd love to make a Russian spoon, which is painted/lacquered somehow after it is finished.

Aug 21, 2008. 9:20 PM [REPLY](#)



spoonmann says:

Email me if you would like to know how to finish a wooden utensil where it stays smooth. osagemann@yahoo.com John

Mar 2, 2009. 4:48 PM [REPLY](#)



chabias says:

Aug 22, 2008. 8:09 PM [REPLY](#)

I've yet to see a wooden utensil that doesn't get "fuzzy" over years of use. You can grab just a piece of brown paper bag or plain cardboard to sand it smooth again.



spoonmann says:

Mar 2, 2009. 4:51 PM [REPLY](#)

Email me at osagemann@yahoo.com and I'll share with you the steps I use. I have posted several comments throughout this forum, check them out.
John



morfmir says:

Mar 3, 2009. 2:56 PM [REPLY](#)

Why not just make a instructable with the steps?
That way all users can benefit from your knowledge.

Or write them here in the comments.

/Thomas



spoonmann says:

Mar 2, 2009. 4:29 PM [REPLY](#)

If you would like to know the way I finish a wooden utensil email me at:
osagemann@yahoo.com. My utensils never get fuzzy, no matter how long they are wet. I have done some pretty harsh test on the wood I use to make my utensils. I boiled a spoon for 3 days (all I did was add water) At the end of the 3 days, the spoon was still as smooth and it did not crack. Another test was; I put a spoon in water for a month (all I did was add water for the month to keep the spoon covered) and then I layed it in the sun for 3 months. I took it in the house and washed it and re treated it (other than being darker from the sun, was still the same) I only know one wood that will stand up to that kind of abuse... Email me if you want to know more, John



morfmir says:

Aug 21, 2008. 10:47 PM [REPLY](#)

This is the only way to finish it imho. If you put paint on a spoon there are a risk that it will fall of in the food.



laurenmendoza says:

Aug 22, 2008. 5:30 PM [REPLY](#)

yeah, so maybe its as i suspected: you arent supposed to USE russian spoons :(



skaldedgrifon says:

Feb 15, 2009. 11:50 AM [REPLY](#)

Thanks for the howto. I really like the horsetail info and linseed oil beta. I also like how you show different versions of the item. It is also real neat that you start with a log and take it through to finish product. Thanks also for the follow-up sanding info on what to do after a few washings.



specopps117 says:

Nov 30, 2008. 7:09 AM [REPLY](#)

Does any one know where i can pick up some of this stuff?
All I need is the wedge the chisle the spoon knife and the log XD
Also would it be possible to take a store bought piece o' wood wetify it and carve it?
(Im not near a forest)



morfmir says:

Nov 30, 2008. 9:57 AM [REPLY](#)

Where in the world are you located?
There are a some online shops with green woodworking tools that sends worldwide.
The wedge you can get in any hardware shop. Just get one that are used to spilt firewood. Or you can use a froe. A froe is also available in online shops with green woodworking tools.
You don't need the chisle to make a spoon.

<http://www.woodsmithstore.co.uk/shop/Products/Tools/>
<http://stores.ebay.co.uk/The-Old-Tool-Store>

But you really need a fresh log. If you don't have access to a forest what about a park or a garden? Any wood will do as long as it is fresh cut.

/Thomas



specopps117 says:

Nov 30, 2008. 12:39 PM [REPLY](#)

Texas, USA
thx...



riverbandit says:

Oct 14, 2008. 3:30 AM [REPLY](#)

nice collection of tools



pyroelfears says:
you have so many outragiuse tools

Oct 13, 2008. 5:47 PM [REPLY](#)



specopps117 says:
DUDE!
are you a miner or something?
Lumberjack?

Oct 11, 2008. 11:24 AM [REPLY](#)



smashbob says:
amazing +1

Sep 6, 2008. 8:56 AM [REPLY](#)



whiteoakart says:
I really like this Instructable. Thank you.

Sep 2, 2008. 9:31 AM [REPLY](#)

We have this plant where I live. Rustic campers use it as a pot scrubber for cleaning out the burned bits in the bottom of the campfire pan. I have never seen it used for sanding. We call it snake grass, but it is also called horsetail here, as well.

I will have to try this.



Pwag says:
I've never used horsetail/snake grass for sanding, but on an episode of the new yankee workshop he uses it on something or other because the grass is loaded with silica which puts a fine polish on things.

Sep 2, 2008. 11:46 PM [REPLY](#)

Very nice.

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