I've heard of people who feel like the maintenance involved with a wood cutting board is not worth it, but most discerning cooks find that the functionality, beauty, and longevity of a great wood cutting board far outweighs the minimal maintenance involved. If a wood cutting board is built well and cared for properly, it will last a lifetime as a beautiful, solid and functional kitchen companion. What follows are the essentials, but much more information on the care and maintenance of wood cutting boards can be found with a bit of digging.

**Finish & Maintenance**

Spoonman cutting boards come pre-seasoned with either mineral oil & beeswax or salad bowl finish. The salad bowl finish is a non-toxic-when-cured wiping varnish and is used for end grain boards only. This finish soaks all the way through the board and gives the wood a great "base coat" seal. The word "varnish" can be concerning for some people on a food-contact product, but rest assured that it is 100% stable and non-toxic after it cures for seven days. If you choose an end grain board with the salad bowl finish, this base coat will eventually start to wear off in the center of the cutting surface where the most action happens, and once the wood starts to look at all dry, you should begin using mineral oil. Long grain boards will always be pre-seasoned with mineral oil & beeswax, and if you would like an end grain board but prefer that it come with mineral oil & beeswax, I would be happy to do that.

A wood cutting board should be oiled once a month to keep it stable and moisture resistant. You can use 100% food grade mineral oil (not mineral spirits, AKA paint thinner), which can be purchased at a local hardware store by the quart or online by the gallon. Vegetable oils and olive oils should be avoided, as they go rancid quickly. There are some other oils that can be used, but mineral oil is the classic finish; it's the cheapest, and it presents the least potential for problems. There are also a wide variety of products on the market which are labeled "cutting board oil" or "butcher block conditioner", etc. The vast majority of these have a mineral oil base with various waxes and/or essential oils added. After oiling, some people will rub the surfaces of their board down with a block of 100% beeswax. John Boos sells a thicker product that is very nice called "Board Cream" that is mostly unbleached beeswax that has been thinned down a bit with mineral oil. Different people swear by different oils and waxes, but regardless of which product you choose, you will want to make sure you reseal your board about once a month or so to keep it in optimal condition and maximize its life. Depending on how you clean it (we'll get to that in a moment) it may dry out sooner or stay oiled longer. If your board ever starts to look dry, it is probably a little past time to reapply your product of choice.

**Stability & Safety**

Cutting boards do not naturally have a good bond with a countertop, and should be "secured" to the workstation for safety. Professional chefs often use a wet towel under the board, but this is not usually the most practical option at home. There are two basic options for stabilizing a mobile cutting board at home, each with their pros and cons.

**Option 1** is to put something grippy under it. In this case, I recommend using grip liner (sometimes called shelf liner) - it is
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cheap, lasts a long time, can be custom cut slightly smaller than your board, and it allows the board to be flipped over during prep for a fresh cutting surface, and then both sides (and the grip liner) can get wiped down later. In a few months when the grip liner stops being grippy and the board begins to slide a bit, the liner can easily be replaced. One downside to the grip liner is that it makes moving the board a three step process (lift board, move grip liner, set board down). Another downside is the fact that water can become pooled in the liner under the board and will slowly absorb up into the wood, causing it to warp temporarily and possibly even split at an edge joint. End grain boards are more susceptible to this type of problem than long grain boards.

Option 2 is to attach rubber feet to the bottom, providing permanent stability. This makes moving the board much easier and also elevates it for ventilation, providing peace of mind that there is no water (and possibly bacteria) pooled underneath it. It does, however, render the board one-sided. Even using only one side, though, a solidly built hardwood board will last a very long time. If you choose rubber feet and at some point down the road decide to swap them around to start using the other (fresh) side of your board, the small screw holes can fairly easily be filled/disguised.

Both are good options, but I would say the deciding factor should probably be how much the board is going to get moved. My standard size chopping stations are fairly hefty and mine stays in place on my countertop, but I know there are some people that do move them around quite a bit.

(For much more information on Food Safety as it pertains to cutting boards, please visit the “Info” page at my website.)

Removal of Odors

To remove odors from your board, you can use coarse salt, baking soda, vinegar, lemon juice, or any combination of these. One popular option is to use only one side of your board for onion, garlic, shallots, etc., so you don’t have to worry about those odors leeching into your other food. Even if your board has feet and is generally “one-sided”, it is still feasible to keep a piece of grip liner handy and throw it down on your countertop and flip your board over (feet side up) and cut onions and garlic on the bottom, working around the rubber feet.

Disinfecting

Cutting boards can be disinfected in a number of ways. Hot soapy water can be used, but care must be taken to never submerge the board as warping and cracking can result. Undiluted white vinegar is a great disinfectant that can be especially good for people with chemical allergies. 3% hydrogen peroxide is also a good option and can be used by itself or in conjunction with vinegar. Some people use a diluted bleach solution, but it is not my preferred approach. Personally, I just treat my board like part of my countertop and wipe it down as needed. Wood boards should never go in the dishwasher. Also, if your board is not elevated on rubber feet, it is imperative to never leave standing water or food juice pooled under your cutting board, especially an end grain board. Regardless of how well you’ve oiled it, the water will slowly absorb into the board and can cause major warping and cracking. (Cracks are almost always repairable, but...) Generally, you want to protect the wood from any extreme changes in heat or humidity, especially ones that occur rapidly. If the board gets too hot and/or wet the wood will expand and warp (and possibly split at a glue line), and if it gets too cold and/or dry the wood will shrink and the board can crack at the joints.

Please feel free to contact me with any questions!

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