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Spoon Carving Tutorial

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Description :

This is the second part of a two part article on carving woodenware in the Scandinavian style.

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Spoon Carving Tutorial

This is the second part of a two part article on carving woodenware in the Scandinavian style. Part 1 ([Here](#)) discussed the woodworking tools and techniques for making bowls and troughs. This article will focus on carving spoons. Similar methods can be used for ladles. I'll post a review of the tools I used in another article.

I have not shown the grips and holds that are required for this type of whittling. If you would like to see these shown, please look up the references listed at the end or visit [Del Stubbs](#).

Del's website lots of great information on Scandinavian spoon carving techniques, carving grips, as well as information on how to select a natural crook for spoon carving, and even one on making your own birchbark knife sheath. Del is planning on adding some links to videos showing various carving techniques as well.

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The two blanks shown in the bowl are from Del Stubbs. One is basswood, the other is birch. Both of these woods are easy to carve and have very fine grain. You can also make your own blanks from green wood. Please look at the website linked above or the references at the end of this article for more information.



Spoon blanks One blank is basswood, the other is birch.

The spoon blanks have been cut into a traditional Scandinavian shape with a bandsaw and are ready to carve.



Spoon blank side view The deep neck provides makes the spoon less likely to break.

I like to start by refining the profile of the spoon. In the next photo I have smoothed out the handle shape and begun to carve away the excess wood on the bottom of the handle.



Step 1. Smooth the top of the blank.



Step 2. Remove the excess wood from the bottom of the handle.



Step 3. This is a good time to change the shape or length of the handle. I opted for a simple curve for this example.

Then I rough out the bottom of the bowl



Step 4. Remove the corners from the bottom of the bowl. Keep removing the edges of the cuts til the surface is smooth.



Step 4a. Be careful when working against the grain - it is easy to chip out more wood than you intend.

Step 4b. Some careful trimming and the chip is repaired.



Step 4c. Here is the bottom of the bowl, roughed out.

Then I carve the hollow of the bowl. You can use just the spoon knife for this work, but I prefer to use a gouge to rough out the bowl and save the fine edge of the spoon knife for the finishing work. Below are several tools that work for the rough work.



Other roughing tools You can hollow the bowl with just the spoon knife, but I prefer to start with a gouge of some type and save the edge of the spoon knife for the finishing work.



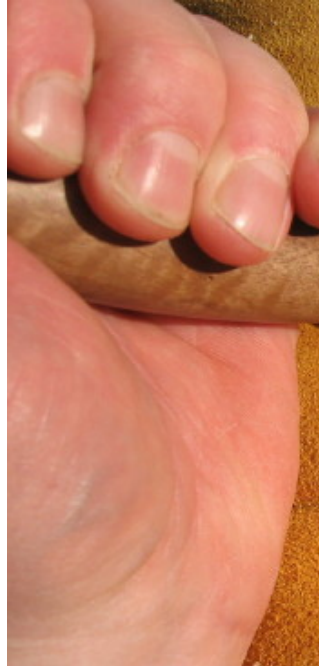
Step 5a. Hollowing with the large spoon gouge. If you hold the gouge as shown and keep the bottom of your hand against the outside of the bowl, the gouge cannot easily slip and cut you. Note that you would cup the bowl of the spoon in the opposite hand while carving.



Step 5b. A smaller straight gouge. This small Japanese gouge is one of my favorites for the initial hollowing work on spoons.



Step 5c. Initial hollowing is complete Now this is ready for the spoon knife.



Step 6a. Smoothing the bowl. Spoon knife at work smoothing the bowl.



Step 6b. Turn the spoon ... to smooth the other side.



Step 6c. Bowl is now smoothed.



The spoon knife is handy on any inside curve ... like the bottom of the handle.



or the side of the handle

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Here's the rough carved blank, ready for fine tuning to get the bowl a bit deeper and to smooth out the lines.



Carving mostly done ...



Here's the profile

At this point, I do a bit more hollowing with the spoon knife, and some smoothing on the exterior. As you work, be sure to check the thickness of the bowl frequently. You do not want to make it too thin!

Now the spoon is ready to sand and finish. I like to use food grade walnut oil, but any food safe finish will work. Most good woodworking stores will have one available. If you decide to use a raw food grade oil finish like walnut oil or flax seed oil, be aware that these finished can take a long time to cure. This doesn't really create a problem since these oils are edible.



The finished spoon This spoon has been sanded, scraped, and finished with walnut oil. It's ready to use!

Two finished spoons and a bowl

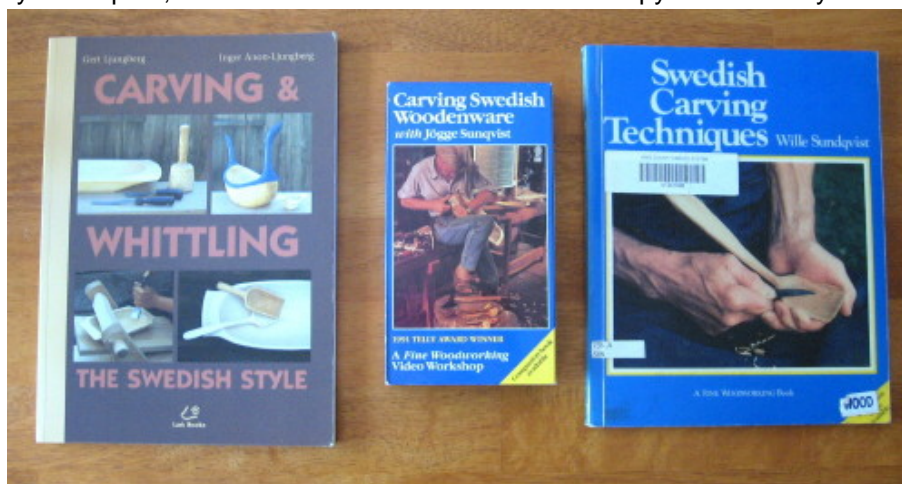
Here is a fine example carved by Schwert. Nice job!



Buckthorn Eating Spoon Made from a blank supplied by Spoons of Wood. Del Stubbs spoon knives and Forged OSF used by Schwert

References

If you found this article interesting, I encourage you to look up the three references I studied before writing the article. All three are currently out of print, but it is well worth the effort to find a copy at the library or via a used book seller.



"Swedish Carving Techniques" by Wille Sundqvist (Taunton Press, 1990, ISBN 0-942391-45-4). The original title is "Talja med kniv och yxa". This book provides an entire introductory course in making woodenware in the Swedish style. The first sections of the book provide background information on selecting and sharpening tools, followed by sections on whittling techniques and spoon design and construction. The descriptions walk you through the entire process of making a spoon from selecting the blank, through whittling techniques, to finishing and detailing the final product. The section on spoon design highlights the most common mistakes and ways to avoid them. One outstanding aspect of the text is the quality of the writing - Sundqvist explains why to do something, rather than just showing how he does it. A truly excellent book.

The companion video to Wille Sundqvist's book is "Carving Swedish Woodenware" (Jogge Sundqvist, Taunton Press, 1990, ISBN 0-942391-34-9). This video is another excellent reference. It summarizes the material from Wille's

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book and shows all of the techniques in use. The dialog provides clear explanations of each step as Jogge steps the viewer through carving of a bowl and two spoons. An excellent reference in its own right, I highly recommend this video for the beginning spoon or bowl carver.

My final reference was "Carving & Whittling: The Swedish Style" by Gert Ljungberg and Inger A:son-Ljungberg (Lark books, 1998, ISBN 1-887374-40-x). This book starts with a good discussion of wood (specific to Sweden, though) and moves on to projects. The text provides an excellent overview (using photographs and sketches) of designs for bowls, spoons, and other greenwood projects. I think my favorite thing about this book is the way the authors present several alternative methods to create similar items. I think this is a perfect book to stir the creative impulses for those who have already mastered the technical aspects described in Sundqvist. Also highly recommended.