

# Butcher Block Care & Repair - A How-To Guide

## Table of Contents

### Part I – How to Care for Butcher Block

1. How to Use Safely and Maximize Longevity . . .	1
2. How to Clean . . . . .	2
3. How to Deodorize . . . . .	3
4. How to Disinfect . . . . .	4
5. How to Oil . . . . .	5
6. How to Apply Board Cream . . . . .	6

### Part II – How to Repair Butcher Block

7. How to Repair Splinters (“Wind Shakes”) . . .	7
8. How to Repair Splits . . . . .	8
9. How to Repair Cracks . . . . .	9
10. How to Repair Scratches & Stains . . . . .	10
11. How to Repair Minor Dents . . . . .	11
12. How to Repair Damaged Countertop Corners .	12

## *How to Use a Butcher Block Safely and Maximize Its Longevity*

### A tip for ensuring safe use

- To avoid cross-contamination (i.e., bacteria from raw meat migrating to other food), dedicate one cutting board to be used exclusively for prepping raw meat or fish and designate a second board specifically for preparing other food, such as fresh produce.

### Tips for maximizing the life of your butcher block

- To promote longevity, store your butcher block out of direct sunlight. Sunlight can cause wood to dry out.
- Do not allow water or other liquids to stand on butcher block. Liquids can cause spotting. Spots can be sanded away, but it's smarter to avoid the hassle.
- Keep it clean, but oiled.

## *How to Clean a Butcher Block with a Natural Oil Finish*

### First, the basics

- Immediately wipe up any spills to prevent surface penetration and staining.
- After using your butcher block, be sure to clean it thoroughly.

### Cleaning tips

- Use a sponge or wash cloth dipped in hot, soapy water to remove all food residue.
- Rinse the board's surface. But never immerse a wood cutting board or chopping block in water!
- Dry the board thoroughly using paper or cloth towels.



## *How to Deodorize a Butcher Block*

Keep your butcher's board smelling fresh.  
White vinegar is quite effective.



- Neutralize odors before they arise.
- Fill a spray bottle with white vinegar.
- From time to time, as you prepare food on your butcher block, spray vinegar onto it.
- Allow it to stand for a least 30 seconds before rinsing and drying.

## *How to Disinfect a Butcher Block*

### Disinfect kitchen surfaces you use for food preparation



- It's necessary to kill germs, not just reduce their count. You'll need a disinfecting solution that destroys ALL microbes in 10 minutes.
- Use a 3 percent hydrogen peroxide. You can blend your own solution using 35% food-grade hydrogen peroxide by mixing one part with 11 parts of water.
- Pour the solution over the board. Spread it using a clean sponge. Let the solution stand for 10 minutes.
- Rinse the solution off the board using a clean, wet sponge.
- Dry the board using a clean cloth or paper towels. Afterwards, oil the board.

Disinfect after prepping raw chicken, meat or fish.

## *How to Oil a Butcher Block*

### Use food-safe oil to keep butcher block moisturized

- Moisturizing helps prevent butcher block from drying out or cracking.
- Apply a generous amount of oil to the surface of the block. The best way to distribute the oil over the board's surface and sides is to use a nonporous material, such as a grocery bag, to spread. Allow the oil to stand overnight.
- Remove any remaining excess oil with a paper towel the next day.



## *How to Apply Butcher Block Cream*

For the most effective maintenance, use board cream in combination with oil.

- Whereas oil penetrates the surface of wood to moisturize it, a good board cream will leave a silky, wax barrier.
- Apply a generous amount of board cream to the block's surface. Use a non-porous material or a cloth to spread the cream over the block's top and sides. Allow it to sit overnight.
- The next day, use a soft cloth to remove any excess cream remaining.



## *How to Repair Splinters (“Wind Shakes”)*

### Partially detached wood slivers are called “wind shakes”.



- What originally set the stage for the wood to splinter was wind shaking the growing tree, disturbing its molecular structure. Subsequent excessive dryness can result in a wind shake.
- Apply a small dollop of white glue to a small piece of paper.
- Slip the paper (glue side up) between the raised splinter and the surface of the block.
- Press the shake onto the paper so the glue transfers and sticks to the underside of the shake. Remove the paper.
- Press the shake back in/onto the board. Wipe off any excess glue.
- Place a heavy object on top of the shake. Let it sit at least overnight.
- After the glue has dried, lightly sand the spot using a fine-grade sandpaper.
- Finally, oil the entire block.

## *How to Repair Splits in Butcher Blocks*

Excessive dryness can cause adjoining wood rails to separate slightly.



- Fill the gap between the wood rails with white glue.
- If practicable, use a pipe clamp or a similar device to apply pressure to squeeze the affected rails back together.
- If the gap is too large to fill with glue, or you're unable to apply pressure, try blending your own filler material.
  - Mix paraffin and mineral oil in a 1:4 ratio. Melt the paraffin. Add in the mineral oil. Stir the mixture into a uniform blend.
  - Pour the mixture into the void between the wood rails. Wipe off any excess. Allow the filler to dry.
  - Lightly sand the filled area. Finally, oil the entire block.

## *How to Repair Cracks in Butcher Blocks*

### A “crack” is a separation within a rail.

- It’s usually a sign that a block is not properly anchored.
- Like other wood products, butcher blocks naturally expand and contract in response to changes in moisture and temperature. If a butcher block is anchored too rigidly in place, it will be susceptible to cracking.
- Inspect how the block is anchored to its base. If necessary, adjust anchoring to allow freer movement of the block.
- Liberally apply mineral oil or butcher block oil to the affected area over the course of several days.
- If a hairline crack remains, try filling it with white glue. For slightly larger cracks, refer to steps recommended for repairing splits.
- For an even larger crack, consider gluing a thin shim or wood wedge into the gap.
- Follow up with light sanding and oiling.



## *How to Repair Scratches and Stains in Butcher Blocks*

Stains and scratches might be inevitable, but that doesn't mean you have to live with them.

- Faint stains and light scratches can be easily removed with baking soda or coarse salt. Sprinkle some on the affected area then use a damp sponge.
- You'll need sandpaper for more stubborn stains and deeper scratches. Start with a very fine-grain paper (e.g., 150) and work your way down through more coarse grades (e.g., 100 and 80-grain) until successful. Be careful not to further damage your butcher block, and remember to always rub along the grain, only in one direction.
- Next you will need to sand it smooth again, using progressively finer-grit paper. Move your way back up through sandpapers of grits 100, 150 and ultimately, 220.
- Wipe away any grit and dust remaining on the board. Gently wash and dry your board, then oil it.



## *How to Repair Minor Dents in Butcher Blocks*

Even though it's tough, butcher block is not immune to minor dents and divots.



- Use fine sandpaper to sand the dented area (in one direction only) along the grain of the wood. If necessary, fold the sandpaper and use the folded edge to sand inside the dent.
- Using very fine sandpaper, lightly sand the area surrounding the dent to remove any surface scratches. Sand in a single direction, along the wood grain. Wipe off any dust.
- Plug in your iron. Set it to the highest heat setting and allow it to warm up.
- Once your iron is hot, pour water into the dent and onto the surrounding area.
- Fold a towel or cloth once. Place it over the dent. Allow the water to seep into the cloth.
- Place the hot iron on the damp cloth. Move the iron in a continuous, circular motion until all the water has dried up. This usually takes about 60 seconds.
- Remove the cloth and let the wood cool. With a little luck, the dent will have lifted. If not, simply repeat the entire process until you're pleased with the result.
- If your butcher block has a natural oil finish, apply oil to it. If your butcher block has a varnish finish, apply a bit of EZ-DO gel, a product made by John Boos & Co., to a paper towel and wipe it back and forth over the affected area. Gently wipe off any excess. Allow time for drying. Repeat as necessary.

## *How to Repair Damaged Butcher Block Countertop Corners*



You will need a sanding block, plus sandpaper in 80, 100, 150 & 220 grits (coarse, medium, fine, very).

- Attach a sheet of coarse sandpaper to the sanding block. Sand the intersecting edges. Sand in one direction only, always toward the affected corner.
- Once you have removed all rough edges, move to the next-higher sandpaper grit-level and repeat the sanding procedure.
- Once you have achieved a smooth finish, slightly “ease” the corner by lightly sanding around it, again always sanding in the same direction.
- Apply oil to the entire countertop.