

Finishing What You Begin

Applying finish is where many otherwise fine woodworking projects meet their Waterloo.

Woodworkers often restrict their thinking about finish materials to one or two kinds. For example, I developed a dim opinion of



polyurethane because I consistently applied too much of it too quickly.

I'm far from expert when it comes to finishing wood (and other things, for that matter), but I do know that finishes are of four basic types – oil, varnish/polyurethane, lacquer and water-based.

Poly is fine for resisting wear and moisture. It's perfect for, say, a kitchen table. But don't use too much; surface cracks are

more likely with four or five coats than just one or two.

Oil-based finishes don't protect like polyurethane, but they're easier to apply and repair. Some include stain, others are clear. Both darken wood as more is applied. Be careful to let each coat sink-in before putting on another and sand lightly between coats. Oil-based products can be applied with a brush, but I generally use a lint-free cloth. Old T-shirts work well, especially those promoting sports teams you no longer support because they traded-away your favorite player. For more gloss, apply paste wax after the oil is completely absorbed. Once a year, freshen up the surface with another coat.

Varnish (and polyurethane) are durable and highly protective. Application (brush or spray gun) can be tricky and they take forever to dry, which invites runs and dust. Both can give you a nice high-gloss finish, if that's what you're after, but they're also available in less glossy formulations. If you're brushing-on varnish, use long, slow, steady strokes to avoid creating tiny bubbles which will ruin your top coat. For a really smooth job, wet-sand between coats and remove all sanding residue.

Good old shellac is still around, too. Because it's alcohol-based, it dries quickly. It comes in different tones, from clear to orange/amber. Sand (gently) between coats; get too heavy-handed and you'll sand right through to the bare wood, and (trust me) that will mess-up your day.

Water-based finishes are very popular. They're less polluting, but also less durable. For best results, apply with a synthetic bristle brush. Don't panic if your water-based poly looks milky when it's first applied; it will dry clear.

Sorry for such a brief treatise on a such a complex subject. Lots more info is available in magazines and on the Internet.

Spring Is The Time To Check Gutters

The drainage system around your house diverts thousands of gallons of water away from your home instead of into your basement. This system of flood prevention warrants a semi-annual inspection. Done right, it will keep the gutters draining away from your home.

Gutter-checking times are in the spring before heavy rain and in the fall after leaves have fallen. Leaves and water cause the most damage to drainage systems.

To reach your gutters, you will need a ladder. When setting up the ladder, make sure the ladder is set on good, stable ground. Use caution if you have to lean the ladder against the gutters as the weight of the ladder and your weight may bend the gutter. If you need to clean the gutter from on the roof, the ladder should extend past the roof line by four rungs. This will allow for easy access to the roof and easy access to the ladder when you are done.

Look up for power lines around your property and call your electric co-op if they might obstruct your cleaning. Any stream of water, if it hits a power line, will conduct electricity.

To make sure your gutters are clear, pour a large pitcher of water in the top and watch to make sure it flows out. Standing water causes most gutter problems, like rust and corrosion. That's also a good time to check for any leaks in the system.

Kids' Corner Safety Poster

Never let water splash on electrical cords.



Calisa Kenoyer, 14 years old

Calisa is the daughter of Dan and Lori Kenoyer, Newell, S.D. They are members of Butte Electric Cooperative, Newell, S.D.

Kids, send your drawing with an electrical safety tip to your local electric cooperative (address found on Page 3). If your poster is published, you'll receive a prize. All entries must include your name, age, mailing address and the names of your parents.

Seafood Sensations

Stuffed Mushrooms

- 18 large mushrooms, cleaned, with stems removed and chopped fine
- 2 T. minced onion
- 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce
- 4 oz. jumbo lump crab
- 2 T. melted butter
- 1 T. mayonnaise
- 1 tsp. garlic salt
- 3 oz. Brie, cut into 18 pieces

Place mushroom caps on a cookie sheet. Brush caps with some butter and sprinkle with garlic salt. In a skillet, sauté mushroom stems with onion, Worcestershire sauce and remaining butter. In a bowl, combine crab and mayonnaise. Fill caps with mushroom and onion mixture; top with crab mixture and 1 piece of cheese. Bake at 350°F. for 10 to 15 minutes or until mushrooms are tender and cheese is melted.

Debra Weaver, Box Elder
Cooperative Connections

Baked Fish and Rice

- 1-1/2 cups boiling chicken broth
- 1 T. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup uncooked long grain rice
- 1 (2.8 oz.) can French-fried onions, divided
- 1/4 tsp. Italian seasoning
- 1 lb. fresh or frozen fish fillets, thawed
- 1/4 tsp. garlic powder
- Dash paprika
- 1 (10 oz.) pkg. frozen chopped broccoli, thawed and drained
- 1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese

In a greased 11x7x2-inch baking dish, combine broth, rice, Italian seasoning and garlic powder; cover and bake at 375°F. for 10 minutes. Add broccoli, Parmesan cheese and 1/2 of the onions. Top with fish fillets and sprinkle with paprika; cover and bake an additional 20 to 25 minutes or until fish flakes easily with a fork. Uncover and sprinkle with cheese and remaining onions. Return to oven for 3 minutes or until cheese is melted.

Arllys Kays, Florence
Cooperative Connections

Scalloped Oysters

- 2 cups freshly rolled cracker crumbs
- 1/2 cup heavy cream
- 1 pint whole oysters, drained
- 1 tsp. salt
- 1 stick butter
- 1/8 tsp. pepper
- 1/8 tsp. nutmeg

Cover bottom of greased 1-1/2-quart baking dish with 2/3 cup cracker crumbs. Top with 1 cup oysters, dot with 1/3 of the butter. Repeat layers. Combine cream and seasonings; pour over casserole. Top with remaining cracker crumbs and dot with remaining butter. Bake at 425°F. for 20 to 25 minutes.

Maxine Roberson, Rapid City
Cooperative Connections

Cheddar Ranch Crab Spread

- 1 (8 oz.) pkg. cream cheese, softened
- 1 (6 oz.) can lump crab, drained
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 1 packet Hidden Valley Ranch Salad Dressing & Seasoning Mix
- 3 T. chopped green onions
- 1 tsp. hot sauce
- Toasted baguette slices
- Fresh thyme, if desired

Combine all ingredients except toast slices and thyme; mix well. Refrigerate, covered, at least 1 hour to allow flavors to blend. Garnish with fresh thyme. Serve with toasted baguette slices. Note: Spread also can be heated in microwave for 1 to 2 minutes for a warm dip. Pictured, *Cooperative Connections*

Fish and Cheese Chowder

- 2 T. butter
- 6 T. chopped onion
- 6 T. chopped celery
- 1 cup chopped carrots
- 1/4 cup flour
- 1/2 tsp. salt
- Dash paprika
- 2 (10 oz.) cans chicken broth
- 3 cups milk
- 1 cup grated processed cheese
- 1 lb. fresh or frozen fish fillets, cut into 1-inch cubes

Melt butter in a large saucepan. Add vegetables, cooking until onion is transparent. Blend in flour, salt and paprika; cook 1 minute, stirring constantly. Gradually add broth and milk; cook, stirring constantly until thickened. Add fish; simmer until fish flakes easily – 5 minutes for fresh fish or 10 minutes for frozen. Add cheese, stirring until blended.

Phyllis Holtz, Rosholt
Cooperative Connections

Crab Salad

- 1 pkg. imitation crab, shredded
- 1/2 cup mayonnaise
- 1/2 cup chopped black olives
- 1/2 cup chopped celery
- 1/2 cup chopped green onion
- 1/2 cup shredded cheese
- 1/2 tsp. onion salt
- Ground black pepper

Combine all ingredients; serve on assorted crackers. Dorene Nelson, Martin
Cooperative Connections

Please send your favorite casserole recipes to your local electric cooperative (address found on page 3). Each recipe printed will be entered into a drawing for a prize in July 2006. All entries must include your name, mailing address, telephone number and cooperative name.

Note: the lemon bread recipe in the February issue should be baked for 50 to 55 minutes.