

Protection + Cleaning Tips

Teragren Bamboo Countertops/Table tops

Protection Tips:

Bamboo countertops, like hardwoods, need oiling or re-seasoning to seal and protect from bacteria. A properly applied oil finish will prevent cracking and moisture loss.

There are numerous oils available for bamboo and wood countertops for cleaning and protection. Some companies market them as special “Butcher Block Finishes” or “Butcher Block Cleaners”; however, they are generally simply food grade mineral oils which work very well.

Before applying oil to the countertop, warm the oil slightly. Apply with a soft cloth going with the grain, allowing the oil to soak in for several minutes. When the bamboo won’t absorb any more oil, wipe off the excess with a dry, clean cloth. Don’t worry about applying too much – more is better. When applied correctly, mineral oil seals the pores of the bamboo blocking moisture from penetrating. Constant wetting and drying causes bamboo, like wood, to dry out which may result in cracking and warping.

New or old countertops that have become dry may need 5 to 10 coats to re-season. Cracks should be puttied and sealed. Once the surface has become conditioned, regular applications of 1 to 2 coats monthly are recommended depending on your site conditions. A beeswax finish should then be applied for optimal performance, but isn’t necessary.

Note: We recommend against the use of olive oil, vegetable oil, or other organic food-based oils. These finishes may become rancid and sticky with regular application and time.

Beeswax Top Coat - Optional

Beeswax is an optional addition to the refinishing process and an excellent natural moisture barrier. Beeswax “sits” on the surface as opposed to oil which soaks in. As a result the beeswax fills in pores that the oil can’t bridge. This helps to prevent moisture, bacteria, and other contaminants from getting into the surface.

Should water sit on the surface for an extended period of time, it may cause the finish to turn white in color. The finish will typically return to normal when it dries out. You may also apply more finish at any time. *Note: It is important to keep the oil in and the water out. Beeswax helps to lock in the oil.*

Beeswax is a soft paste - to apply, simply wipe on with a clean cloth. Excess paste may be easily buffed off with a clean cloth. Once the finish has dried, it may be buffed to a shine adding a low luster sheen to the surface. Normally only one or two coats are necessary. The finish is food safe and even edible.

Cleaning Tips

All cutting surfaces should be cleaned and sanitized frequently. Test your cleaning solution in an inconspicuous area first to ensure there are no adverse reactions. Some of the various techniques recommended are as follows:

- **Hot water and soap** - Scrub surface with hot water and soap. Rinse and dry thoroughly. Important note: **Never** leave water standing on the surface for an extended period of time. Bamboo, like any wood, is porous and will soak up water causing the surface to crack when it dries.
- **Vinegar** - To disinfect and clean your bamboo countertop, wipe with full-strength white vinegar after each use. The acetic acid in the vinegar is a good disinfectant, effective against E. coli, Salmonella, and Staphylococcus. Vinegar is especially good for people with chemical allergies. Keep a spray bottle of undiluted vinegar handy for easy cleaning and sanitizing.
- **Hydrogen Peroxide** - 3% hydrogen peroxide may be used as a bacteria-killer. To kill the germs on your countertop, use a paper towel to wipe the surface down with vinegar; use another paper towel to wipe it with hydrogen peroxide.
- **Bleach** - Sanitize countertops with diluted chlorine bleach or vinegar solution consisting of one teaspoon of liquid chlorine bleach in one quart of water or a one to five dilution of vinegar. Flood the surface with a sanitizing solution and allow it to stand for several minutes, then rinse and pat dry with paper towels.

To eliminate garlic, onion, fish, or other smells from your cutting surface

- **Coarse salt or baking soda** - Rub the surface with coarse salt or baking soda. Let stand a few minutes and wipe salt or baking soda from countertop, and then rinse. You may need to re-season after rinsing your surface.
- **Lemon juice**- Another very easy technique is to rub fresh lemon juice or rub a cut lemon over the surface of the countertop to neutralize onion and garlic odors. You may need to re-season after rinsing your surface.
- **Vinegar** - Keep a spray bottle of undiluted vinegar handy for easy cleaning and sanitizing. You may need to re-season after rinsing your surface.
- **Scraping** - Use a good steel scraper or spatula often. Scraping removes the majority of the moisture that builds up on any hardwood countertop. Never scrub a bamboo countertop with a steel brush (a steel brush will ruff up the finish and should be avoided).
- **Paper towels and air drying**— pat dry with paper towels and remove surface objects to allow to air dry.

Note: Always re-season with an oil wipe down after rinsing and drying your surface.

Maintenance

Regular (monthly) applications of mineral oil followed by beeswax finish (optional) are recommended. Once surface has been properly conditioned, the re-applications of these finishes will take far less time, effort and materials. The mineral oil may be applied over the beeswax finish.

Refinishing

To remove old stains, scratches and marks, sand the surface of the bamboo; sand evenly to avoid "hills" and "valleys" from occurring.

Changing a mineral oil finish to a hard shell or urethane finish

Simply wipe down the surface with mineral spirits to remove the beeswax. A new top coat of oil-based polyurethane or other oil-based sealer may then be applied. Do not apply a water-based polyurethane - oil and water do not mix and the finish will not react well.

Finishes that offer good options:

- Waterlox : sealer and finish made with tung oil
- Osmo: hardwax-oil made with natural vegetable oils and waxes
- Minwax: oil-based polyurethane
- Duraseal: oil-based polyurethane

These finishes do not require maintenance. Clean with mild soap and water. Avoid harsh chemicals or detergents as these may damage the finish. Should scratches occur, touch up is advised to prevent moisture penetrating and causing water-related damage. Excessive or deep scratches can only be removed by sanding the surface and re-finishing.

Visit our [Storage + Installation Guidelines](#) for more information.

Let us know if we can help answer any further questions for you or your customers. Please visit us at www.teragren.com or call 800.929.6333 ext 3120 for technical assistance. 1/10