



HALLMARK — ARCHITECTURAL WOOD SLABS

When choosing a finish for your new Hallmark Slabs, there are several things to consider. How you plan to finish your slab will determine how it can be used. There are several options, and we will explain the pros and cons of each type of finish below. The three main types of finish to consider are Mineral Oil, Tung Oil/Citrus, and Urethane.

Mineral Oil:

Mineral oil is a popular choice when a natural look is desired; it is also one of the only finishes that can be considered a “Food Grade” finish depending on the quality. Although all the finishes listed can be considered “Food Contact” safe, only mineral oil can be purchased as a “Food Grade” option. They can be applied over a water-based stain. It will require more maintenance, however, such as re-oiling by applying additional oil until it is saturated and will no longer absorb more oil. Sealing with beeswax will provide better water resistance. Do not use oils such as linseed oil, peanut oil, coconut oil, olive oil, or walnut oil, as these can turn rancid over time and are not food safe. (Follow manufacturer’s recommendations for finish application).

Pros:

- Easy to apply.
- Brings out the natural grain of the wood.
- Doesn’t affect the color of the wood when applied.
- Mineral oil will not spoil or turn rancid when exposed to warm temperatures.
- Refined mineral oil will not have a scent and will not give off any foul odors.
- Highly refined mineral oil is non-toxic.
- Mineral oil is considered hypoallergenic, with a very low risk of allergic reactions.

Cons:

- When used as a food surface, it is possible to ingest in small amounts; to prevent this, you can apply a coat of beeswax over the mineral oil after it dries.
- Unrefined mineral oils are classified as carcinogens, so choosing refined mineral oil is essential.
- It will be necessary to reapply mineral oil regularly as it is not a long-lasting finish.
- It is not waterproof.
- Can appear dry and dusty when not maintained.

Tung Oil/Citrus Solvent:

A 100% all-natural finish option, 100% pure Tung Oil with Citrus Solvent is another great option for finishing your slab. Pure Tung Oil is a fast-drying oil and comes from a seed, not a nut. Because it does not penetrate dense wood well, it is typically thinned/cut with a

natural solvent called Citrus Solvent, generally a 50/50 blend. This is a natural product that is derived from citrus peels.

When applying Tung Oil/Citrus solvent, it will likely be necessary to apply several coats until the slab no longer absorbs any further oil. After each coat, you must wait 40 minutes to an hour before looking for any spots that appear dry. Keep reapplying using this method until no further dry spots are found - wipe off any excess. Over the next 5 to 7 days, monitor any seepage and wipe it off with a clean rag. (Follow manufacturer's recommendations for finish application).

Pros:

- Zero VOC (pure tung oil)
- Easy to apply.
- Food safe.
- Can modify the glossiness or sheen by the number of applied coats.
- Attractive appearance when applied.
- All Natural, eco-friendly, and non-toxic.
- Will not yellow over time.
- Mildly water resistant.
- Resistant to alcohols and acids.
- Dents and scratches are easier to repair.
- Can be used over stained wood, provided it is oil-based and not water-based.

Cons:

- Can require up to 5 coats to produce a pleasing satin sheen.
- Slower penetration.
- Can be more expensive than other oil options.
- Produces a mildly unpleasant odor for several days until its fully cured.
- Oil must be stored in a dark area and be kept away from light and heat.
- Can take 3-4 days drying time.

Polyurethane – Water/Oil Based:

There are two types of polyurethane to consider, water or oil-based. Polyurethane is a safe finish option. However, the (FDA) Food and Drug Administration maintains that the surface is not considered “food-safe” until the finish has dried and is fully cured. (Follow manufacturer's recommendations for finish application).

Water-Based Polyurethane:

Typically has a shorter drying time than oil-based polyurethane. Water-based polyurethane uses water in lieu of solvents as the base. Most water-based poly goes on clear and stays clear over time.

Pros:

- Easy to Clean.
- Low VOC – Odorless.
- Will not amber over time.
- Shorter curing times than oil-based poly.
- Can be formulated to be safe for food contact.
- Flexible finish, which can be high-gloss, semi-gloss, satin, or matte.

Cons:

- Requires more coats when finishing.
- Water-based poly is not as scratch and moisture-resistant as oil-based poly.
- Longer curing times.

Oil-Based Polyurethane:

Oil-based poly dries slowly and can have a stronger odor which some may find objectionable. Once dry, however, the odor does dissipate. Oil-based poly does have a slight yellow tint, unlike water-based, which goes on clear. Oil-based poly requires a little more effort to clean; mineral spirits or paint thinner may be required for deep cleaning. Oil-based poly can achieve a rich, golden glow with several coats.

Pros:

- Surface will be smooth due to its self-leveling properties.
- Will require fewer initial coats than water-based poly.
- Provides better abrasion and scratch resistance.
- Hard shell finish.

Cons:

- Longer curing times.
- Deep cleaning up may require mineral spirits in lieu of soap and water.
- Pronounced odor while drying.
- Sticky feel until it is fully cured.

Sources/Manufactures of Finish

www.cuttingboard.com - Offers options on multiple finishes such as Food-Grade mineral oil. Other products include Cutting Board Wax – a natural wood wax that is a mixture of Mineral Oil/Carnauba Wax/Beeswax. They also offer an alternative Vegan product offering made from Coconut Oil. Through a process called refractionation, they have utilized the oils that have been steam distilled. By doing so, the product will NOT go rancid and is considered superior to most other oils, and is shelf stable. Their Coconut Cutting Board Oil is 100% plant-based and vegan-friendly as it contains no mineral oil or petroleum by-products.

<https://odiesoil.com/> - Offers premium Oil and Wax finishes. Odie's Oil products are eco-friendly. They do not contain solvents, catalysts, VOCs, allergens, or hardeners.

<https://www.rubimonocoatusa.com/> - Offers products such as Rubio Monocoat's - OIL PLUS 2C, which is a hard wax oil wood protector and is only one single layer. This product is VOC-free and does not contain any water or solvents.

<https://www.rustoleum.com/product-catalog/consumer-brands/watco/butcher-block-oil-and-finish> - Offers food contact-safe finishes such as Watco Butcher Block Oil & Finish, Tung Oil finishes, and Urethane finish options as well. Minwax has been a leading brand of wood finishing and wood care products since 1904.

<https://waterlox.com/> - Offers multiple Tung Oil sealers and finishes along with a Urethane line of products family-owned since 1910 and a member of the NWFA.