

How to Waterproof and Seal a Wooden Countertop

A wooden countertop provides an elegant design touch for any kitchen, so it's important to waterproof the wood to protect and maintain its beauty. While there are a variety of finishes available for use on other wood furnishing -- polyurethanes for flooring or varnishes for tables, for example -- a food preparation area will look better if it's not hidden beneath a protective film that feels like hard plastic. The ideal waterproof protection is a food-safe natural wood oil or hardwax finish that adds no flavors, scents or toxins to your food.

1

Wipe the top surface and edges of the countertop with a tack cloth to collect any dust or food particles prior to applying the oil finish.

2

Slip on a pair of rubber gloves that are suitable for kitchen cleaning.

3

Pour a generous amount of linseed oil, mineral oil, tung oil or INTERBUILD Hardwax Wood Oil (natural wood oils) onto a clean, lint-free cotton cloth. Food grade linseed oil, mineral oil and tung oil can be found at home centers, such as Home Depot, but also at many hardware stores, grocery or health-food stores, drugstores and retail paint outlets. Interbuild™ Hardwax Wood Oil is food-safe and also VOC-free (no alcohol) and can be found on HomeDepot.com or HomeDepot.ca. Painter's wiping cloths are supplied by the bag at home centers, hardware stores and paint stores, or you can use an old clean t-shirt or household rag.

4

Rub the natural wood oil into the wood while moving the wiping cloth in the direction of the wood grain. Make sure the cloth is thoroughly saturated with the oil as it is rubbed into the wood, until the entire top and edges have been saturated. Wait 20 minutes and then wipe off any leftover oil that has pooled on the surface.

5

Wait eight hours or when the surface is dry to touch, then repeat steps 3 and 4 for the underside of the countertop. Allow eight hours to dry, then repeat steps 3 and 4 again for a second coat on all countertop surfaces. A minimum of two coats of natural wood oil are recommended on all wood surfaces. It is not wrong to apply three or more natural wood oil coats to a wood countertop.

6

Apply a maintenance coat of natural wood oil to the top surface every week for the first month. A lightly used countertop may only need to be touched up every six to eight weeks thereafter. The natural wood oil adds hardness and water resistance. You can tell that a new coat is needed by splashing a few drops of water onto the surface. If the water fails to bead up, the countertop is no longer waterproof.

Tips

- To extend the life of your waterproofing finish, that is not a hardwax wood oil, you can rub a layer of carnauba wax onto the counter two days after completing Step 5. The wax finish will last about four weeks under normal use, but substantially less for a large family or a commercial kitchen.
- You may prefer to use a food-safe waterproofing finish that includes a wax, such as the Interbuild Hardwax Wood Oil, which is specifically formulated for use on wooden countertops. The finish's formula incorporates hardening oils and waxes.

Warnings

- Do not use the counter as a cutting surface. Always use a separate cutting board when slicing bread, meat, seafood or fresh produce.
- While natural wood oil takes only eight hours to dry, it may not completely cure for two days. Depending upon the humidity level of the home and the type of wood, the first multicoat application may take as long as a week to cure.
- Avoid putting hot pots directly onto the wood countertop surface. Use a trivet or similar protection to prevent direct contact between hot surfaces and the wood surface.

Things You Will Need

- Painter's tack cloth
- Rubber gloves
- Food-Safe raw linseed oil, mineral oil or hardwax wood oil
- Lint-free cotton cloth
- Optional Carnauba wax