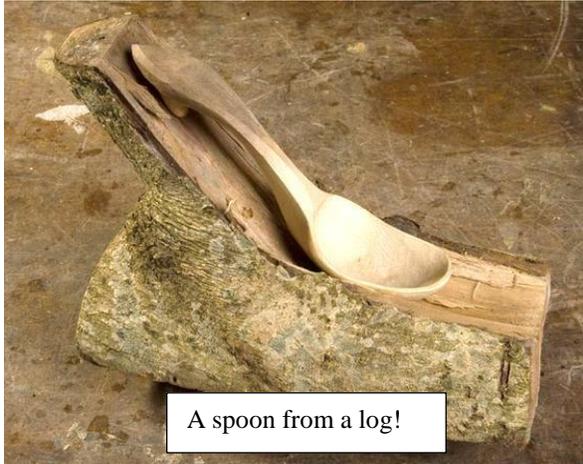


Swedish Style Carved Spoons

By Mark Campbell May 2016

Swedish spoons are usually cut directly from a green cherry, maple or other hardwood tree branch or a log using an axe, and then carved with straight and bent knives. The handle forms a thick spine where it meets the bowl to provide strength and a good grip for your fingers!

Swedish knives can be found chip carved, or with Kolrosing or with incised decorations added to the handle. They would make good woodburning projects too. Many different shaped handles and bowls are possible. Swedish spoons are carved to suit a specific use. Some spoonmakers can sell their work to collectors for \$30-\$60 and more for each spoon!



A spoon from a log!



Traditional spoon carving tools

Read all of the following step-by-step instructions before carving your spoon so you know where you are going.
(Or at least where you should end up!)

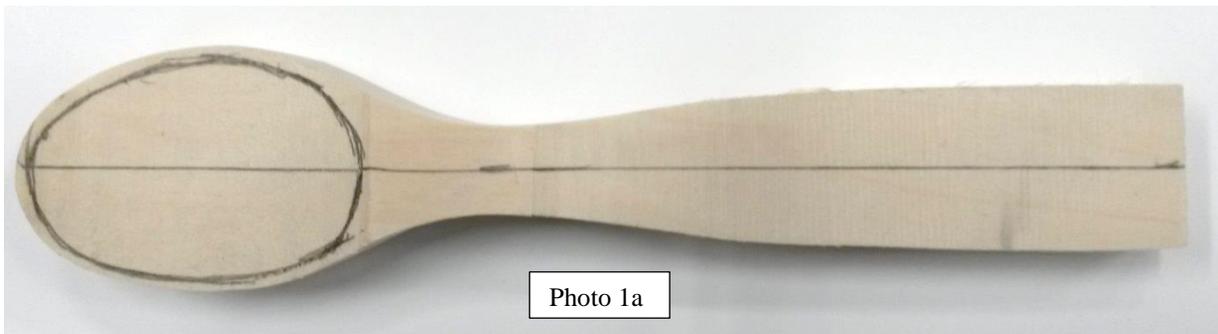


Photo 1a

Step
1

Carving the Spoons Draw a centerline down the middle of the spoon top and bottom (**photo 1a**). To find the center, measure and mark the width at the square end and in the middle of the spoon. Connect with a straight edge. Draw the line around the bowl area so there is about 1/8" thickness for the rim.

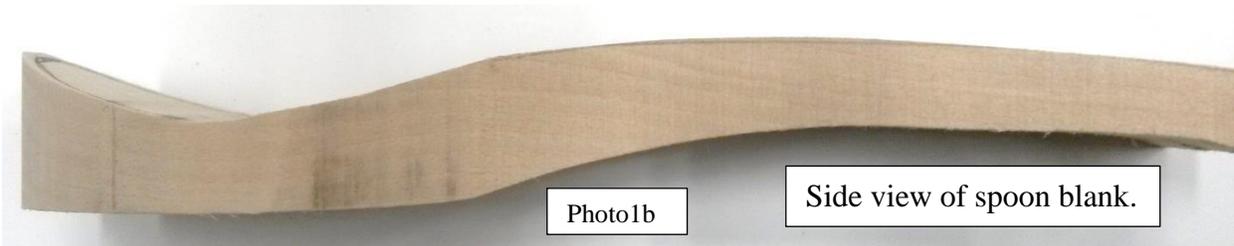


Photo 1b

Side view of spoon blank.

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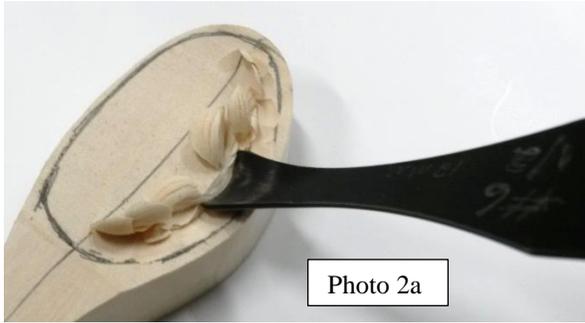


Photo 2a



Photo 2b

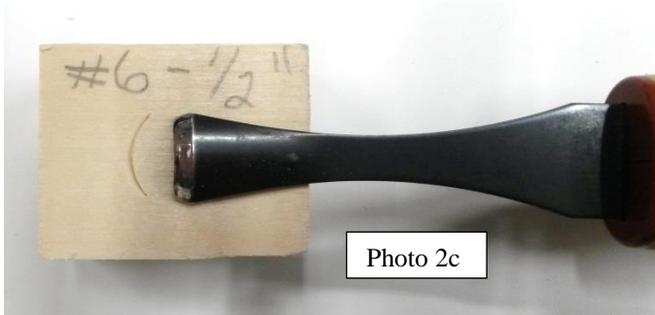


Photo 2c



Photo 2d

Step
2

Start carving out the bowl by “scooping” the wood out around the rim with a gouge (**photos 2a/b**). Do not go past the line you drew so the bowl rim does not get too thin. I used a #6 – 1/2” Flexcut gouge (**photo 2c**). You can use some other similar sized gouge.

After the initial “scooping” you will need to pay attention to grain direction to get a smooth, evenly carved bowl. You will find the grain will meet at the bottom of the bowl. To cut those fibers out go across the grain with the gouge. Be careful to not go too deep at the bottom of the bowl. Leave at least 1/8” thickness there (**photo 2d**).



Photo 3a



Photo 3b

Step
3

Now mark the shape of the grip so it flows off of the spoon bowl and into the handle (**photo 3a**). Try to get this to look symmetrical. Then carve this shape straight down to the underside of the spoon (**photo 3b**).

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Step
4

Mark a line on the outside of the spoon bowl. Do not carve past this line so that the rim will not get too thin (**photo 4**).

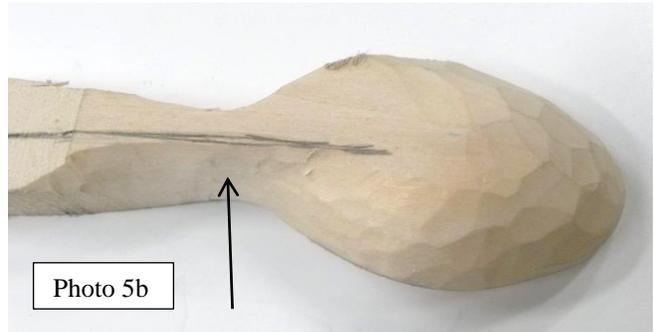


Photo 5 a

Photo 5b

Redraw the centerline on the back of the spoon if needed. Begin rounding the back of the bowl at the tip of the spoon (**photo 5a**). This is almost all end grain so a sharp knife is a must! Continue to carve from the top and round down the sides.

Step
5

Eventually the grain direction will change and you will have to carve toward the handle. Carve the bowl shape so that a “spine” is left at the centerline. **Photo 5b** shows 1/2 of the carving done to begin forming the spine (at the arrow). Carve the other side and match the shape of each side for symmetry. The spine on the back of the spoon is angled in a kind of wedge shape to the top side of the spoon (**photo 5c**). Note that the spine in **photo 5c** is very long. A lot of this could be carved away later depending on the shape of your spoon handle.

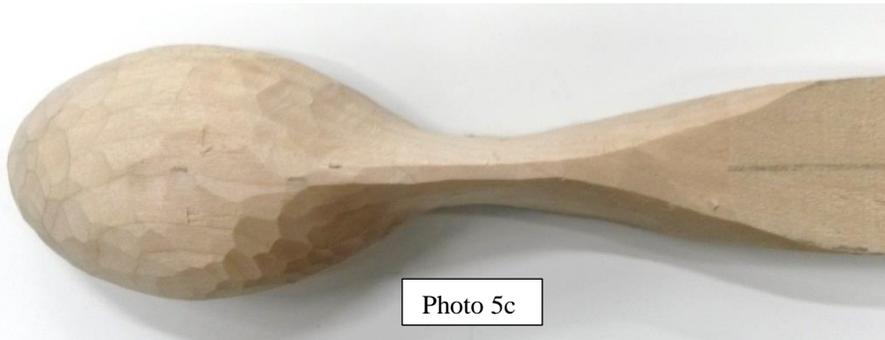


Photo 5c

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Step
6

The rest of the carving depends on what you want your spoon to look like. Many shapes and designs are possible. The spoon in **photo 6a** eventually became the lower spoon in **photos 6b and 6c**.

Decide on the thickness of the handle and carve this first. Most Swedish spoons seem to be pretty thin. However, since these spoons we are making are soft basswood, I chose to leave my spoons kind of thick. Be sure to carve off all saw marks on all sides.

Go back to the bowl and fine tune it inside and out. Try to carve away the ridges made by the gouge so the surface is smoother. Also, carefully carve away the lines you drew in steps 1 and 4 to form a rounded and smooth rim. Carve lightly here!

Decide the handle shape and draw on the outline. Try to get it symmetrical. Carve to the lines you drew on your spoon.

Your spoon can be left with the tool marks or you can sand it.

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Decorating The Spoons Google “Swedish spoons” and click on “images for Swedish spoons”. There you will find hundreds of fine examples.

To design your handle shape trace the outside of your spoon on a blank paper and then pencil in your design. Make several designs and choose the best one. When you have the design right transfer your design to the spoon. Use transfer paper for intricate designs. Simple designs could be drawn directly onto the spoon.

Types of Decorations

Chip Carving. The chip carving on spoons appears to be lightly carved. This is because the spoon is generally thin and perhaps a shallow carving is easier to keep clean. A shallow cutting angle would have to be used. The designs are fairly simple but be sure to practice on scrap wood first to master the shallow carving technique.

Kolrosing or Incising. This technique is used a lot in Swedish spoons and many other decorative items. First, carve your spoon’s outside shape. Then seal the wood with a thin clear sealer that soaks into the wood grain. A thick varnish that stays on top of the wood may not be the best sealer. The idea is to seal the wood fibers to keep the colorant (i.e. coffee, or charcoal) only in the freshly cut design. After sealing, lightly pencil in your Kolrosing design. Then cut the lines to about a 1/16” or so depth. For thicker lines- cut from both sides to pop out a thin chip. A Kolrosing knife is the best tool for this but a thick bladed knife -such as the large Flexcut chip carving knife, or a pocket knife- may work just as well. The Kolrosing knife is pushed thru the wood rather than pulled, so there is better control around tight curves (with practice of course).

Finishing. Coffee grounds, cinnamon, coal, and other colorants can be used to fill in the lines cut for the Kolrosing design. Some spoon handles are dipped in a nice colored paint after carving- which is a nice effect!

You can use a clear paint-on acrylic sealer on the spoon to seal it. This is in the craft paint section in your local craft store. If you will use it for eating or food preparation then you may not want to use a sealer on your spoon.

See some examples of spoon designs below.

Step
7



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More Swedish Spoon Handle Designs



Kolrosing

Chip carved



Kolrosing



Incised and chip carved



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Here are some more examples of Swedish spoon handle decorations.



The handle is carved with a nice shape that flows into the bowl area.



Superb spoons with Kolrosing and chip carving.



Carved and then dipped in paint.



A Kolrosing knife.

I hope you enjoy Swedish spoon carving and you are able make plenty of them!
Mark

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Trace your spoon's finished shape here and design a handle decoration.