

## Classic Finishing Techniques

By Boyce Gahagan

My all-time favorite finish is a mixture of tung oil or boiled linseed oil, and spar varnish, thinned with turpentine, mineral spirits or denatured alcohol. The latter is a thinner for shellac. I have used all three thinners and all have worked well for me. This is a forgiving finish and can be mixed in any proportions. My favorite is equal parts of oil, varnish and thinner. Spar varnish is best for a more durable finish.

Brush in on. RUB IT OFF. Apply to a small area. The key to a really good finish with this mixture is to prepare the surface well. There should be no scratches left on the surface before you start to apply a finish of any kind. For the first coat, flood the surface with the mixture and reapply to any areas that appear dry. When the finish becomes tacky, start rubbing with a clean cotton rag. If the rag becomes soaked with finish, change to a clean rag until all of the excess is thoroughly rubbed dry. This is a penetrating mixture and it's very important that all of the excess is removed. If you wish a deeper finish, wait 24 hours to apply another coat.

Subsequent coats of finish go on the same way except that they tack up more quickly and require more rubbing to remove the excess. How fast these coats dry depends on the temperature and humidity and the amount of varnish in the mixture. For small items such as bowls and small spindles, one coat works well and can be waxed after 24 hours.

I mix my own wax as well. A combination of beeswax, boiled linseed oil and turpentine. In a double boiler on very low heat, melt a chunk of beeswax. TAKE THE CONTAINER OUTSIDE and add a small amount of oil and turpentine. I try for a consistency of warm butter. It should be soft while maintaining its shape. After it cools, if it is too hard or soft, just add more oil or wax, whichever is appropriate, and reheat. Apply the wax with 0000 steel wool. After drying, buff with a clean rag. To maintain the finish, just rewax. This is a penetrating mixture and it's very important that all of the exce.

Rejuvenating the finish is easy. First clean the surface well with 0000 steel wool, turpentine and a little boiled linseed oil. Apply a fresh coat of finish and rub it out with clean rags. When the final coat is cured (24 hours), reapply a wax topcoat.

Another nice feature of this mixture is that you don't have to have a dust free area to work in. In addition, open-grained woods such as oak don't need to be filled before finishing. Simply sand the wet finish with fine sandpaper, which creates a pore filling slurry. This method is easier than using filler and there are no problems of compatibility or bonding between the layers of finish.

To learn more about finishing, refer to "Classic Finishing Techniques" by Sam Allen.