

DAACS Cataloging Manual: Utensils

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OCTOBER 2003

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INTRODUCTION

The Utensil form should be used *only* for kitchenware. The only knives, for example, that should be cataloged into the *Utensil form* are table knives and larger kitchen knives or cleavers. Folding knives, pocketknives, etc. should all be cataloged into *GENERAL ARTIFACTS*. The **UTENSIL TABLE** should also include kitchen utensils such as ladles and flesh forks. If you can identify a utensil as a specific form such as a ladle or flesh fork, ask the DAACS administrator to add that specific form into DAACS under *Utensil Form*.

Descriptions are taken primarily from:

Hume, Ivor Noel.

1991 *Guide to Artifacts of Colonial America*. Vintage Books, New York: pp. 177-184.

1. MAIN UTENSIL TABLE

1.1 Artifact Count

Do **not** batch utensils.

1.2 Completeness

Choose either “Complete” or “Incomplete.” Ignore the “Shank Only” option.

1.3 Utensil Form

Forks, knives, and spoons are generally categorized as either “1 Piece” or “2 Piece.”

- 1-piece utensils are cast or forged as a single piece of metal. Pewter spoons, for example, are usually 1-piece. Occasionally one sees knives forged as 1-piece utensils. Use “1 Piece: Unid.” if you can tell that the utensil was 1-piece, but you can’t tell if it was a spoon, fork, or knife.
- 2-piece utensils have two main parts, usually a bone, wood, or ceramic handle and the rest of the utensil. Most knives and forks are 2-piece utensils. Use “2 Piece: Unid.” if you can tell that the utensil was 2-piece, but you can’t tell if it was a spoon, fork, or knife.

1.4 Plating

The default for this field is “None”.

If a utensil is plated, choose from either “Gold”, “Silver”, or “Tin”.
If you cannot tell if the utensil is plated or not, choose “Unidentifiable”.

1.5 Spoon Rat Tail

A Spoon Rat Tail is a metal “spinal rib” on the back of a spoon bowl that reinforced the connection between the bowl and the stem (Figure 1). Seen in silver and latten spoons, the rat tail is most often associated with an egg-shaped bowl. The single or double metal “scale” at the junction of the bowl and the stem replaced the rat tail by the 1740s. (See Hume 1991:181-183.)



Figure 1: Rat Tail Spoon

When you’re cataloging a spoon, enter “Yes” or “No” into this field as appropriate. If you have a spoon but you can’t tell if it had a spoon rat-tail or not, enter “No”. For all other utensil types, enter “N/A” (the default) into this field.

1.6 Handle Decoration

The three options in this field are “Carved”, “Inlay”, and “Molded”. One might, for example, find a bone handle with diagonal lines carved into its surface. In this case, enter “Carved” under *Handle Decoration*, and describe the exact decorative motif in the Notes.

NB:

- If the part is a handle but has no decoration, use “None”.
- If the utensil is not a handle, use “Not Applicable” (the default). This applies to tangs.
- If handle has decoration but you cannot identify it (due to preservation reasons), use “Unidentifiable”.

1.7 Burned?

Choose “Yes” or “No”. The default is “No”. Ignore the “N/A” option.

1.8 Marks

The default is “None”. Makers’ marks are often seen on the back of utensils, usually on the handle. If there is a mark, enter into this field exactly what appears on the utensil. For example, this field might read “Sterling Plate” or “Old Company Stainless.” If there is a non-letter mark on the utensil, describe this in the Notes.

1.9 Conservation

The default is “No Conservation”. If the utensil has been conserved, enter “Yes” into this field and describe the conservation in the Notes.

1.10 Mended?

Choose “Yes” or “No”. The default is “No”. Ignore the “N/A” option.

1.11 Post-Manufacturing Modification

Choose “Yes” or “No”. Ignore the “N/A” option.

Post-Manufacturing Modification is a field seen in all of the different artifact categories. Use this field when an artifact appears to have been physically modified in order to change its original function. For example, one might find a spoon with a hole drilled into its bowl, a modification that allowed the spoon bowl to be hung as a pendant.

Catalog the object as it would be cataloged in its original form. For example, if you have a drilled spoon, catalog it as a “Spoon, 1 Piece.” Enter Yes under Post-Manufacturing Modification, and describe in the notes that the spoon has been drilled.

2. SPECIFICS TABLE

The specifics table is used to enter detailed information about individual parts of the utensil, e.g. handle, bowl, etc.

2.1 Part

Use the pull-down list to select the utensil part being recorded.
Options are:

- “Blade”
- “Bowl”
- “Handle”
- “Stem”*
- “Tang”
- “Tine”**

- “Unidentifiable”

***Stem**

The term “stem” is used only with 2-piece forks. It is the metal part between the handle and the tines. Enter “Stem” under **Part**, and list the **Shape** as “Not Applicable”. For 1-piece spoons and other utensils, use the term “handle” instead of “stem.”

****Tine**

Tines are the spearing points on forks. Complete tines need to be cataloged into the Specifics table under **Part**. However, only one tine per fork needs to be entered, unless the fork has two or more complete tines with *different* length measurements. **Shape** should be entered as “Not Applicable”. Record the appropriate **Manufacturing Technique** and **Material**, and record the measurement for **length**. Be sure to enter the fork’s original number of tines in the Measurements table. To clarify, for example, the number of tines still present on the fork, describe the fork in the Notes.

2.2 Shape

The **shape** field provides a number of general shape descriptors for Blades, Bowls, Tangs and Handles, as outlined below.

2.2.1 Knife Blade

Shape options are Curved, Pointed, and Straight:

- “Curved Blade”: The blade has a rounded end, which curves slightly upward. (*See Fig. 2, nos. 4,5,6*)
- “Pointed Blade”: The blade is straight and tapers to a point. (*See Fig. 2, no. 1*)
- “Straight Blade”: The blade is straight, with either a squared-off or a rounded end. (*See Fig. 2, nos. 2,3,7*)

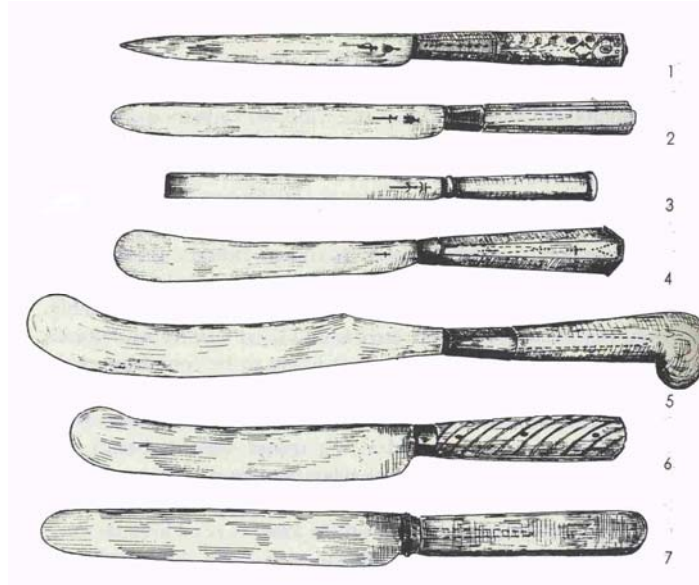


Figure 2: Knife Blade Shapes
(From Hume 1991: 182)

2.2.2 Spoon Bowl Shape

Options are Egg, Fig, and Puritan.

- “Egg-shaped bowl”:



Figure 3: Egg-shaped Bowl

- “Puritan-shaped bowl” (Figure 4: top); “Fig-shaped bowl” (Figure 4: bottom):



Figure 4: Puritan and Fig-shaped Bowls.

NB: Distinguishing between Egg- and Fig-shaped bowls can be confusing. For Egg-shaped bowl the handle attachment is at the wide end of the bowl, whereas Fig shaped bowls are attached at the narrow end.

2.2.3 Handle

Shape options are Angular, Pistol Grip, Round-End, Square-End, and Trifid.

- “Pistol Grip Hndl”



Figure 5: Pistol Grip

- “Trifid Hndl”



Figure 6: Trifid

- “Round-end Hndl”: Round end handles have simple rounded ends
- “Square-end Hndl”: Square end handles have simple squared ends.

- “Angular Hndl”: Angular handles can have various geometric shapes; see #4 in Figure 2 for an example of an octagonal, “Angular” handle.

2.2.4 Tang

Tangs are found on 2-piece utensils. The tang is the metal part that connects the bone or wooden handle to the rest of the utensil. There are two general shapes for tangs: flat and pointed.

- “Flat Tang”: A flat tang is a flattened piece of metal sandwiched between the two halves of a bone or wooden handle. It is held in place by pins that are driven through the width of the handle. **Note:** The pins do not need to be cataloged into the Specifics table. If the pins on a utensil are either complete or particularly notable, describe them in the Notes.
- “Pointed Tang”: Most handles were attached over a pointed, spike-like tang. Early pointed tangs extended right through the end of the handle and were forged over a washer on the end. If you have a bone or wooden handle that appears to have a metal tang inside of it, but you can’t actually see the tang’s shape, you can still assume that it’s a pointed tang. Be sure to enter this pointed tang into the Specifics table. Use Unidentified only if you can’t tell whether or not the tang is pointed or flat.

Important Note about Tangs: Missing tangs should still be recorded. Record the shape as either “Flat” or “Pointed”, depending on whether the utensil is one- or two-piece. *Manufacturing Technique* should be “Unidentifiable” and Material should be “Missing.” No measurements should be taken.

2.3 Manufacturing Technique

Use the pull-down list to select the appropriate manufacturing technique for the part being cataloged.

Options are:

- “Carved”
- “Cast”
- “Forged”
- “Stamped”
- “Molded”
- “Unidentifiable”

2.4 Material

Use the pull-down list to select the appropriate Material for the part being cataloged.

Options are:

- “Ceramic”
- “Copper Alloy”
- “Iron”
- “Missing”
- “Pewter”
- “Plastic”
- “Silver”
- “Stone”
- “Unidentifiable”
- “Wood”

2.5 Length, Width, Height

For all parts that are cataloged, record any complete measurement that can be taken. Thus, the bowl width could be recorded even if the bowl length is incomplete.

3. MEASUREMENTS TABLE

3.1 Object Length, Object Width, Object Weight

Use these fields to record the overall length, width, and weight of each utensil in millimeters and grams. You do not need a complete utensil to take these measurements, just measure what you have and enter that information into the table (note that this is different than what you would do for the Specifics table).

3.2 Fork: Number of Tines

Enter the number of tines that the fork would have originally had, not the number of tines currently present on the fork. This is usually easy to determine, even if the tines are completely broken. For all other utensil types, enter “Not Applicable”.

4. UTENSIL IMAGES

Most utensils should be imaged, especially if complete, unusual, or decorated.

Record image file location, image type and description.