Yanagibas and sujihikis

Posted by mark76 - 01 Nov 2012 19:27

I love making sushi and sashimi, as well as cutting thin slices of meat. Until now I cut these using a petty knife, but I am considering to get a yanagiba or sujihiki.

Nearly everywhere on the net the advice to Westerners is to get a sujihiki rather than a yanagiba, unless you solely want to cut fish. But I wonder why.

As I understand it, a sujihiki is basically a long and thin carving knife. It should be straightforward to sharpen using a WEPS. A yanagiba is aharpened on only one side and has a hollow backing on the other side. I don't know why, but it is supposed to be difficult to sharpen.

Has anyone ever sharpened a yanagiba on a WEPS? Or can you enlighten me more on the differences between yanagibas and sujihikis?

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Re: Yanagibas and sujihikis

Posted by cbwx34 - 02 Nov 2012 06:19

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mark76 wrote:

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Nearly everywhere on the net the advice to Westerners is to get a sujihiki rather than a yanagiba, unless you solely want to cut fish. But I wonder why.

I've read that it's because the sujihiki is closer in style to a western knife, so that a "westerner" would be more likely to buy and use it, and less likely to mess it up.

As I understand it, a sujihiki is basically a long and thin carving knife. It should be straightforward to sharpen using a WEPS. A yanagiba is aharpened on only one side and has a hollow backing on the other side. I don't know why, but it is supposed to be difficult to sharpen.

I don't think they're particularly difficult, just different. I'll use myself as an example, I had no idea about the differences in Japanese style knives until I got into sharpening and started reading about them. If all I knew about was Western style sharpening, and didn't know something as simple as to keep the back - hollow side - flat on the stone, I would have quickly ruined the knife. I've read other examples where sharpeners who didn't know, would try and sharpen the hollow out and make the whole back flat. So I think most of the issues are a lack of understanding.

Has anyone ever sharpened a yanagiba on a WEPS? Or can you enlighten me more on the differences between yanagibas and sujihikis?

I don't know enough to tell you the differences beyond what you already seem to know. Hopefully someone with a bit more expertise will chime in. My initial thought on sharpening a Yanagi style is that it would be easier to sharpen freehand, since the back needs to be kept flat, and the front has a wide enough bevel that angle control isn't as much of an issue. But, I have a Yanagi style knife, when I get a chance I'll try it in the WE, and see what I learn.

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Re: Yanagibas and sujihikis

Posted by FredHermann - 02 Nov 2012 08:21

Clay has a YouTube video where he is working on some type of Shun cleaver. It's flat/hollow on one side, and a complex double bevel on the other. Take a look, he makes it seem pretty simple, as long as you know ahead of time how to handle the edge.

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Re: Yanagibas and sujihikis

Posted by ThomasPrince - 02 Apr 2013 22:51

Well I just finished sharpening my first quality knife on the WEPS. It is a Global G7-R which is a deba single bevel(chisel bevel) type knife much like the yanagiba. It was also made for cutting fish. It works well on fish because the forces that are exerted on the blade by the tissue that is being sliced push the blade away from the bevel side. This is an advantage if you are trying to remove the skin from a fish as it keeps the blade edge riding on the skin or on the bones if you are fileting and keeps you blade from wandering into the meat.

These same pressures are a PITA if you are trying to straight cut vegtables or other tissue. Those pressures make your knife wander away from the bevel side in the cut producing a curved variable thickness slice. At least that is my experience.

And by the way the WEPS put a great bevel on my knife I had screwed up so badly on a Tormec years ago. It was unusable. But this new bevel I cleaned up on some 4K and 8K Norton waterstone so that this is now the sharpest knife in the house...and I am just begining!!

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Re: Yanagibas and sujihikis

Posted by cbwx34 - 03 Apr 2013 10:31

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ThomasPrince wrote:

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Good to hear!

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