# Why water stones?

Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 08:42

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I just recently became a devotee of self sharpening a couple of months ago. Before that, I thought only experts could sharpen my knives because there was such a dizzying array of methods and materials by which it could be done and until somewhat recently, it was all done freehand by craftsmen who probably learned at the hand of other experienced craftsmen.

Enter guided systems like WE (and others) which made expert results obtainable by inexperienced, unskilled knife collectors or someone with a collection of dull kitchen knives which is what got me started. So now I have bought into this WE system and decided to get a PP2. The PP2 was put together at a time when the 1200-1600 ceramic stone was not available due to some production problems (which now seem to have been resolved). This left a gap in the progression of abrasives between the 1000 grit diamond stone and the next available micro fine ceramic stone which shipped as part of the PP2.

Because of that gap, I began to consider the available options including the Chosera water stones made for the Wicked Edge guided rod system. The 2000-3000 and 5000 -10000 sets would very capably fill that gap but going from the proprietary (easy to use) WE stones to the Japanese water stones was messy and the stones have different dimensions making it more complicated to set the bevel etc.

However, having said all that, I have noticed among some here in this forum, there is a preference for using the water stones and I could not help but wonder why. So I would love to hear from those who prefer and use the water stones or who are considering buying them or perhaps you bought them to fill the gap and no longer use them because the 1200-1600 ceramic stone is now available. I would appreciate it if you could share your thoughts and experiences. What do you like about them? Do you regret getting them or if you did would you never consider using the diamond and ceramics. Perhaps you only use water stones, would you also get some of the diamond or ceramics now to supplement your water stones?

I know there is a different feedback and user experience with water stones , but to my untrained eye, you seem to be able to obtain about the same results with the dry, easier to use diamond and ceramic stones, or am I missing something? I am guessing that some here only used water stones freehand before the guided rods were introduced and liked being able to use them with the new rod system and just stuck with the water stones. If so, what is your feelings about diamond and ceramic stones vs water stones?

Thanks for your feedback and insight I am hoping others here are also curious and may learn something here.

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by DAUG - 20 Oct 2012 11:35

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This is a very good question, Scott...and it's something I've wondered myself? And given that I've already stepped into the world of Wet Stones; Naniwa Super Stone 2K & 5K, and Shaptons 8K and 12K,I have my opinions, yet want to hear about their experiences before I share my novice thoughts on the matter. Regardless I'll be curious to hear what our panel of experts have to say on this subject.

Well at least let me share why I jumped into the Wet Stones arena. After spending hundreds of hours learning to re-profile blades, to determine correct angles, deciding when to cut and use bevels, and general "burr" theory.....I still couldn't get the polish and shine off my blades like in any of the YouTube videos. Don't get me wrong, the knives I sharpened were wickedly sharp, but they lacked the shiny sparkle everyone else was achieving. That led me the Wet Stones and this is were I give credit to Steve Pinson of Better Edge and Knive Sharpening Systems for imparting his knowledge on the particulars of these stone type systems. So I've experimented with both stones on basic kitchen knives and I'm amazed at the results (more on that later). They were expensive, and I'm glad I bought them, but I'm still learning on them to develop my technique.....so this is where I stand for the moment and I'm getting better with them as I polish and practice more.

....Now let'me go get the popcorn ready!

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 11:57

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Daug,

C'mon share. Do you only use whetstones or is it part of your collection that includes diamonds and or ceramics? Do you find that having to keep them wet and deal with slurries and mud is more trouble than it's worth? Or, do you enjoy the experience kind of like pottery workers moulding wet clay into some sort of usable end product?

I suspect, but don't know, if it's the actual hands on experience in which you have to balance moisture and some minor chemistry with the tactile feel of sharpening that makes it attractive to some.

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by leomitch - 20 Oct 2012 12:10

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One thing I can say in regard to the Chosera stones...for those who must have a bright and mirror-like surface to their edges, these stones excel. I don't find them too messy(my wife does) and there is a different feel and sound to the sharpening process...I haven't twigged onto those yet as I have with the diamonds, but I shall soldier on until my ear and my hand/touch are sensitive enough to tell me when I should move on to the next set of stones.

Having said all that, the difference in the keenness of the edge is slight but perceptible. Are they an absolute necessity...if you are a molecule polisher, yes. They are good to have at hand to add another dimension to your work for me at least.

Cheers

Leo

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 12:20

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Leo,

Thanks for responding. I know what you mean about the sound and tactile feedback being important. I have dabbled in some more artistic endeavors with some minor success in the past and like any artistic thing we do, incorporating your natural senses, in this case touch, sight, and hearing is an important element of bringing the art together. I have frequently heard that knife sharpening is an art, so why would it be different?

I actually enjoy the tactile and auditory feedback of the different stones as you progress to the finer grits. So it makes sense that some would like the whetstones more for the feel and experience despite the maintenance and cleanup and so forth.

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by DAUG - 20 Oct 2012 12:49

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Scott,

I use the combo of Diamond and Wet Stone to achieve my desired results. I purchased the PP1 system and the Diamond plates are fast and efficient for re-profiling and I usually progress from 100 - 400 grit for "burr" development, then 600 - 1K grit for general blade sharpening.

Note that my wet stones are cut to shape and attached to blank WE platens so they fit my PP1 rod assembly perfectly. So no separate wet stone / water setup. I've used it dry and wet, with best results in the wet mode. I keep a spray bottle of water to the side of my setup to keep the stones wet during progressive stokes. The slurry that develops is what helps with the polishing and sharpening, and the mess is kept to a minimum. As for cleaning, rubbing the platens together helps keep the stones clean when I put them away, but always note to only rub like for like stones together only.

As for the progression, and this is a work in progress;

1. Diamond plate 100 (as necessary) - 400 burr development

2. Diamond plate 600 - 1K sharpmening

3. Naniwa Super Stones 2K - progression

4. Balsa Strope - 3.5 uM (green) Polishing

5. Naniwa SStone 5K - Polishing

6. Shapton 8K - 12K Polishing (optional)

From what Steve indicated stropping would not be necessary when going through the SStone progression, and maybe it's due in part to the play in my PP1 arms, but it's still not reflexive enough for me. So I find it necessary to strope the blade to get that level of shine as necessary.

The Shapton's polish like crazy, and sometimes I'll still strope with the 3.5 uM in the end to get that extreme shine and cut that I like.

The blade is both durable and polished for my needs and I can achieve it at minimal cost without going to the ceramics.

Just my $0.02 from experience.

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## Re: Why water stones?

Posted by PhilipPasteur - 20 Oct 2012 13:39

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www.wickededgeusa.com/index.php?option=c...art=10&Itemid=63

Post 6103. I said most of what I think on the topic, But maybe I can expand on it a little.

When I got my WEPS all I could get in the way of stones was the stock diamonds up to 600 grit. It took me 4 or 5 months to get the 800/1000 paddles. I couldn't get the level of refinement that I wanted with only the 600 grit diamond as the finest grit that I had. I tried lots of things including sandpapers taped to the 600 grit stones, 3M lapping films from 12 down to 0.3 micron, lots of stropping materials such as Semichrome and Mothers Mag wheel polishes in different grades...I even bought three complete horse butts and made my own strops. None of it really got me to where I wanted to be in my sharpening pusuit, and all of it was lots of additional work to actually use.

Now I have been sharpening since I was about 8 years old, some 55 years ago. I had tried many systems and types of stones in hand sharpening, At one point I started researching water stones. Always trying to do things on the cheap, I ended up buying a set of Norton synthetic water stones from around 250 grit up to 8000. Then I got a Chinese mystery natural stone that is supposed to be in the 9000 to 13,000 grit range. Then I splurged and spent over $100 (GASP, I bet Ken Schwartz or Tom will really laugh if the read this) on a Japanese synthetic stone at 10K. Well I was amazed at how much better I was getting my edges ...by hand.

So when I got turned off by all of my attempts to get more refinement on the WEPS with what I had on hand, it was an easy decision to try the Chosera Stones for the WEPS. I started with the 400/600 and 800/1000 stone sets. I was really amazed at the improvement over just the Diamonds to 600. I loved the feel, the cutting speed and the results at the edge. A few months later I sprang for the 2000/3000 set. More improvement..WOW. Finally, after struggling for a few months to justify the cost, I bought the 5000/10K set. Well, I finally got real close to my perfect mirror edge and as Clay has said, at the 1.76 micron grit level of the 10K Chosera, a very nice functional edge for either push cutting or slicing.

Now, I haven't tried the WEPS ceramics yet, but I just ordered the two sets. I will comment more on that as I get some experience with them. From what I have read and the known polishing characteristics of the Naniwa Chosera stones, I kind of doubt I will get as pretty of an edge. As cutting is where it is at though, who knows, I may like them better for certain applications.

As I do some sharpening for pay, possibly the time saved with not having to deal with the water may make up for the potential lowered reflectivity. I will tell you that I can't imagine me using anything other than the Choseras (from the selection I have, which includes a 5K and 15K Shapton set and a set with 10K/12K Naniwa Superstones) When I want a beautiful yet very sharp edge on one of my safe queen/display knives.

Bottom line is that there are lots of ways to get a knife sharp. There are different levels of sharpness or edge tooth for different applications. To get there easily  you need different tools. I think that the Chosera stones have a great fit in that tool kit, and I have not found anything else that gets me to as pretty and

scratch free an edge, as fast, as these stones. The minor amount of additional work involved in using them in no way deters me from using them at every sharpening session. If the pursuit is for perfection, what is an extra few minutes out of an hour or two of sharpening time? Cleanup, just a damp sponge run over the base of my WEPS when changing stones.

I too am curious, how many people out there have the full set of Choseras, or any subset, and what do you think about the results that you get with them?

Phil

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 15:45

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What would be the result of using a 5k/10k set of stones after the micro fine ceramic? Would it produce a more glossy mirror finish or would it not result in an improvement. It looks like the grit of the 10k Chosera is about the same as the fine side of the micro ceramic but as has been mentioned before, the grit comparison is not always an accurate way of determining the result of one stone to another.

Also as a side question a bit off topic. I noticed in an old thread on this forum, WE used to sell Shapton stones about 8 months or so ago, but today they appear nowhere on the site and even discussions of them are mostly found in older threads. I went to the Jende site and found that they have the 30k stone not mounted on a WEPS paddle for $400, so a wild guess would be that they were not selling because of the cost. Or is it that you can do the same thing with Chosera for a good deal less cash lay out?

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## Re: Why water stones?
Posted by leomitch - 20 Oct 2012 16:23

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Hi Phil

I have a complete set and from time to time I do a complete knife after raising a burr with the 100/200 grit paddles. I don't use the complete set often because of the more extensive setup and I am a lazy sharpener... besides I usually get that look from my wife which says, Make it quick and clean up after yourself. You see I work at the kitchen table so my total rig gets in the way even though the huge table I built out of oak is 40 inches long by 35inches wide by 1.5 inches thick. I seem to spread out so there is no room for anyone else. Still I wouldn't be without them. Sometimes I just do everything with the original WEPS and use the final two finest stones to finish up before I use the strops.

Leo

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## Re: Why water stones?

Posted by WayneNicklin - 20 Oct 2012 17:15

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First, I'm a die hard water stone guy. All my life I have sharpened by hand on a number of 3x8 stones. On my WEPS i have handles starting at 220, 320, 400, 600, 800, 1000, 2000, 3000, 5K, 8K, 10K (several brands), 12K, and 15K. I like most will start on the diamonds to start a burr and them go right into the wet stones. Yes you have to keep them wet. Yes they are messy, no getting around that. You have to have an angle cube. Most of my stones are custom make and yes it takes a while to set the angles but you get used to it. The benefits, you will get a gorgeous mirror finish. Yes yu can still strop and I do on 3 x11 sheets of leather, balsa at various grits and nano cloth on glass. At that point it becomes a work of art. Do I do this for all the knives I sharpen? No way but if the client wants a very sturdy edge with a little tooth and a shiny mirror bevel to the naked eye I can do that.

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