Why water stones?

Posted by Scott Sherman - 20 Oct 2012 08:42

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 PhilipPasteur - 12 Jan 2013 22:10

Ken,

The more I use them, I'm coming to the conclusion that day in, day out, the 1k Chosera and the 2k Aotoshi are my favorite two stones to end on. I'll bet (I should try it, then I'd KNOW) I could run through the ceramics and just finish up on those two stones with great results..

Just curious, I don't have the Aotoshi..."Green Brick of Joy".. either in my bench stone selection nor on WEPS handles. Does it do something that I need in relation to the 1K chosera, or the other stones that I have available?

Where did you find it cut for the WEPS? Do you cut the stones yourself? I am always open to finding something new to try... It MIGHT be "better" !

Agreed, I didn't mean to overstate either the time or the mess, but the time is about doubled and I use the water stones in the kitchen instead of on the couch in the living room. So there is impact, but it's not life altering

The time is more related to the extra stones in the progression.. I think, than the effort or "mess" added by using the waterstones. I guess that I have always sharpened in the same place, I have a sharpening "place" where it just works for me... with the WEPS. I have never even tried sharpening on my couch... Interesting concept though. I do have one of those sink tray things that I use with the bench waterstones. Leave the water trickling over the stone... I have to admit, I have not used that much these days... I have succomend to the precision, relative ease and moreover the efficiency, of using the WEPS..

I digress, but, I also have an EP Pro with lots of stones and plates and strops.. it too sits idle...

I probably should practice more by hand... it is easy to lose a hard won skill.

Phil

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Re: Why water stones?

Posted by KenBuzbee - 12 Jan 2013 23:09

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PhilipPasteur wrote:

Just curious, I don't have the Aotoshi..."Green Brick of Joy".. either in my bench stone selection nor on WEPS handles. Does it do something that I need in relation to the 1K chosera, or the other stones that I have available?

I need to get an actual green brick of joy one day

The real world answer is no but there are differences. The 1k Chosera is a refined honing machine. The Aotoshi is more of a loving kiss to the bevel. You'll see a lot more polish after the Aotoshi. If you're going on up, it likely wouldn't matter, but it's a great end point on it's own.

PhilipPasteur wrote:

Where did you find it cut for the WEPS? Do you cut the stones yourself? I am always open to finding something new to try... It MIGHT be "better" !

I got them from Steven Pinson (on this forum) all mounted and nice. He does good work.

PhilipPasteur wrote:

The time is more related to the extra stones in the progression..

Exactly, twice as many stones = twice as long.

PhilipPasteur wrote:

I have never even tried sharpening on my couch... Interesting concept though.

Try it, you'll like it.

PhilipPasteur wrote:

I probably should practice more by hand... it is easy to lose a hard won skill.

That IS true. And I'm in the same boat.

Ken

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by mark76 - 13 Jan 2013 07:14

I don't have the 12K's. Is it a noticeable improvement over the 10K Choseras? And where did you get them?

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by KenBuzbee - 13 Jan 2013 08:39

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mark76 wrote:

I don't have the 12K's. Is it a noticeable improvement over the 10K Choseras? And where did you get them?

Sorry Mark, I don't have the 10k Choseras, but used in sequence with the 10k Superstones, yes, you can see the progression (under magnification)

Is it "noticeable"? In cutting? I seriously doubt it. But it is a smoother finish, if you like that kind of thing

Bottom line, if I'm doing a mirror, I use the 12k and done, no stropping. Leaves a VERY sharp edge that looks terrific.

Oh, and Steven did all my water stones, Chosera and Super.

Those Choseras are beasts! They weigh like a pound each!

Ken

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 13 Jan 2013 12:33

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I covered the 12K in the progression photos I did earlier in this thread. If you take a look, it is easy to see

the improvement with the 12K stones. I notice that the 12K SS adds another dimension to the level of polish and reflectivity, It is a finishing stone and does not cut very much. It is definitely a polishing stone! In theory, at a sub micron grit level, it should give a bit more refinement at the edge. At Ken said, I am not sure I have noticed significant differences in using a knife after the 12K SS as compared to the 10K Chosera. I can see the difference in the scratch pattern under magnification and definitely see an increase in the reflectivity of the bevel with the 12K. If you are looking for a bevel that truly comes close to being a mirror, it is certainly worth using. In addition, for those that worry about (over) stropping rounding the edge, at around 0.9 micron grit, the 12K SS can quite effectively be used as a final abrasive in a progression.

Phil

mark76 wrote:

I don't have the 12K's. Is it a noticeable improvement over the 10K Choseras? And where did you get them?

BTW Ken, I got my Shaptons and all of the Superstones from Steve Pinson as well. He does do very good work. I have been thinking about trying to get some of the low grit Shaptons and perhaps eliminate the diamonds, at least for applications where a bunch of metal does not need to be removed.

Mark, I am not sure how much Steve is around here these days. If you are interested, PM me and I can get you his email address.

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Mikedoh - 13 Jan 2013 16:02

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Or for phone number and email add, you could look at the above photo

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 13 Jan 2013 18:14

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Good point...

Just trying to be helpful... but,

DUH

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by Geocyclist - 13 Jan 2013 18:19

I have been meaning to ask this. What is the difference between "Chosera", "Superstones" and "Shaptons" ? Are these 3 different stones?

Since I started with WE the only thing I have seen for sell by WE is Choseras (and ceramics). Did WE sell these before? Or did everyone get them 3rd party? (I did see the photo above too).

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Re: Why water stones?
Posted by PhilipPasteur - 13 Jan 2013 18:53

They are three different types of synthetic waterstones from two different manufacturers.

The Choseras are made by Naniwa, and are their top end stones. The Superstones are also made by Naniwa. They have similar, if not the same abrasives per grit, but less of it. Or so I have read. They also are considered to be a softer stone than the Chosera line. Lots of folks really like them. The Chosera stones are 2 to 3 times the cost of the SS line.

The Shaptons are...Shapton stones. In this case the conversation is about the Shapton PRO stones cut for the weps. They also have a Glass Stone series. WEPS sold Pro stones cut for the WEPS paddles at one time, but no longer do AFAIK... You can get them from Steve or Ken Schwartz. If you look at Tom's blog linked above and in the WIKI, he does a review of them using the WEPS. I get the idea that they are his favorites of the three. I like them for their ability to provide very uniform scratches... high precision, but grit for grit, they just don't polish like the Naniwa stones. The PROs are pretty close to the Choseras in price... until you get to the 15K and 30K, then they are (to me) crazy expensive. The Shaptons that WEPS had were loose, without paddles and still were quite a bit more money than the Choseras mounted on paddles...grit for grit.

Of course, this is just a brief summary of the main differences. You can read for days...articles online comparing the feel, philosophy, and esoteric characteristics of the three stone types and find fanatics on all sides of claims on which are better...

Phil

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Re: Why water stones?

Posted by KenBuzbee - 13 Jan 2013 20:00

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The one thing I'll add to Phil's explanation (which is spot on) is the philosophy behind each.

In general:

Shaptons are pure cut and leave very consistent grit true scratches

Choseras are a balance of cut and polish and grit for grit, cut slower and polish better

Superstones are more to the polish end. They cut very slowly and polish very well.

Ken

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