

# Pewter matters

## Cleaning that old pewter

### Cleaning instructions

One thing that everybody is agreed on is that pewter is not suitable for the dishwasher!

After that, it gets more difficult, as opinions vary. I do not think anyone would argue with the advice that pieces can be washed in warm, soapy water, then rinsed in clear warm water, and finally dried with a soft cloth.

Over the years the pewter will slowly develop a patina, which is a special feature of pewter. However, what do those who wish to keep the pewter bright, do? This is where opinions start to diverge dramatically. Some would say that you can use a proprietary polish from one of the three main manufacturers, but make sure you do not rub in circles, but rather in straight lines.

[www.goddards.com](http://www.goddards.com)

[www.towntalkpolish.com](http://www.towntalkpolish.com)

[www.haggertycare.com](http://www.haggertycare.com)

Others would say never touch the pewter with an abrasive polish! You take your pick. These latter people would say that cleaning pewter is a job for the expert; and that must be the case for dirtier items.

Can I ask those out there who know about these things to write in and tell me their views on cleaning?

**Alan Williams**

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# Methods of making pewter

## Casting and spinning

### Spun Pewter

Pewter sheets of varying sizes and thicknesses are spun against a metal or plastic form on a lathe giving the finished product a perfect round shape.

Tankard bodies are the most frequently spun items together with their bases. Goblets and circular flasks are also good examples of spun pewter.

### Gravity Cast Pewter

The metal mould has molten pewter poured into it and, if it is required for a hollow tankard handle, pewter is poured out of the mould again, after a few moments and before it has had enough time to set solid, thus giving a hollow handle as it is only at the edge of the mould where the pewter has set.

For heavy cast items, as in tankards and plates, the metal is allowed to set, completely filling the mould. Once the metal has set and cooled a little, the item is removed from the mould, and the pewter is then machined on a lathe to make its shape perfect.

### Centrifugal casting

Most often used to cast intricate items. Molten pewter is poured into a spinning, vulcanised rubber mould. The metal is forced into the furthest and finest extremities of the mould and is allowed to set hard before being removed from the mould for final finishing.

### Sheet Metal Worked Pewter

A sheet of pewter is bent round a metal form and the two edges are altered usually to make a flask body. Cut out parts are then soldered to form a top and bottom of the flask.

**David Hall**

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