



Boat Improvement > With Rich Johnson

RICH JOHNSON PHOTOS



■ When it comes to maintaining stainless steel, products such as Brasso can work wonders. Also, check out Brite Boy, Flitz and polishes from Star brite, West Marine and CRC.

or bits of carbon steel left behind from dragging an anchor chain across a stainless rail.

The only hope of keeping stainless looking new is to clean it whenever it shows signs of being dull, dirty or tarnished. Most of the time, simply washing with a mild detergent or soap and warm water is sufficient. Rinse immediately with clean water, and then wipe it dry with a soft cloth.

Never use steel wool,

TAKING CARE OF STAINLESS

Somehow I grew up believing that stainless steel is actually stainless. Of course, I also grew up believing in the Easter Bunny. The jury's still out on the Bunny, but I have come to accept that "stainless" actually isn't. There are a number of things that can cause it to

lose its shine — fortunately, there are simple steps we can take to maintain the original gleam.

RUST AND STAINS

The truth of the matter is, even with the highest-quality stainless, discoloration, stains or even rust can appear. Corrosion can

result when stuff finds its way into contact with the steel, such as salt deposits

{ As a science project, I compared the results of using homebrew recipes against using metal polish

METAL MUSINGS > the story on stainless

Not all stainless steel is created equal, so it helps to know something about the material.

There is a type of stainless known as 18-8, a reflection of the percentages of elements used in the alloy; 18-8 generally has 18 percent chromium and 8 percent nickel, but the term 18-8 is used in products known as 302, 302HQ, 303, 304, 305 384, XM7 and other grades of stainless that have nearly the same compositions.

One of the common varieties of 300-series stainless is 304. It is nonmagnetic, so you can verify that this is what you're really being sold by using a magnet. When you go shopping for bolts, screws and other small hardware for your boat, 304 is what you're looking for, because it not only resists

corrosion, but it's also slightly stronger and more wear-resistant than its close cousin 316. As a tip, be sure to pass the magnet over every piece of metal on any fasteners you're considering, because you might find nonstainless parts (such as pop rivets, nuts or bolts) that will cause trouble later on.

One advantage of 316 stainless is that it is more corrosion-resistant than 304. This is because it's blended with up to 3 percent molybdenum. The addition of moly makes 316 the primary stainless steel used for marine equipment — except for fasteners and other items where strength and wear resistance are needed. For more on stainless, log onto TrailerBoats.com.



■ You can scrub all you want, but you need the right cleaner to do the job.

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sandpaper or any other abrasive cleaning methods on stainless steel. Also avoid mineral acids, bleaches or chlorine cleansers. And to help prevent corrosion from returning, protect the surface with a barrier coat of paste wax.

HOME BREW vs. STORE-BOUGHT

I discovered a couple of homebrew remedies for removing rust from stainless steel — and, as a science project, I compared the results of using these recipes against using a metal polish from the store.

When a fellow boater mentioned he had success



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■ Home remedies like lemon and salt, when applied with a sponge or toothbrush, can work well but may call for some sweat equity.

removing rust by using Lysol toilet bowl cleaner, I decided to try it. But after 10 minutes of scrubbing, I decided toilet bowl cleaner is best used for toilet bowls,

not stainless steel.

Another suggestion was to use lemon juice and salt. I tried this method, scrubbing the solution on the stained metal with a tooth-

brush, and then washing with soap and water, rinsing thoroughly and drying with a soft cloth. With a bit of elbow grease, this recipe worked fairly well. If I had some lemon and salt (for the day's catch, of course) and I felt the need to polish my stainless, I'd reach for this.

Then I tried a metal polish called Brasso. Almost instantly, the tarnish and light rust were gone and the stainless steel gleamed like new. So, from now on, I'll save the lemon and salt for the fish and carry some metal polish. End of science project. ⚓

As appeared in

