

BLACK TOPS FOR LABORATORY TABLES

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In 1903 I published a short article in the *Journal of Applied Microscopy*, vol. 6, no. 3, pp. 2211-2212, under the title of "An Acid-Proof Table Top." Attention was called in that article to the fact that a formula for blackening the tops of tables had been observed in a pharmaceutical journal, but that the author's name was not printed.

The formula was modified by the present writer and has since been largely used by Professor S. H. Gage and others. It was given to a local cabinet maker in order that the furniture for our laboratories might be finished completely before delivery. I am informed by him that he has used it extensively on other laboratory furniture, shipped to various points, and that it has apparently given general satisfaction.

The writer has received numerous inquiries regarding the modified formula and since the journal in which it was originally printed is no longer published, the revised formula is herewith given for the benefit of those who may be interested in it:

Solution 1

	PARTS
Iron sulphate	4
Copper sulphate	4
Potassium permanganate	8
Water	100

This mixture is thoroughly boiled in a kettle of iron or some other metal and applied while hot. Two coats should be applied. The first should be allowed to dry before the application of the second. The excess of chemicals upon the surface should be thoroughly dusted or rubbed off before applying the next solution.

Solution 2

	PARTS
Aniline	12
Hydrochloric acid	18
Water	100

These chemicals should be put in a glass vessel, the water being added first. No heat is required for this solution; but as before, two coats should be applied, the second being put on after the first has become dry. The surface should be washed and well scrubbed with hot soapy water, followed by a rinsing with clear water.

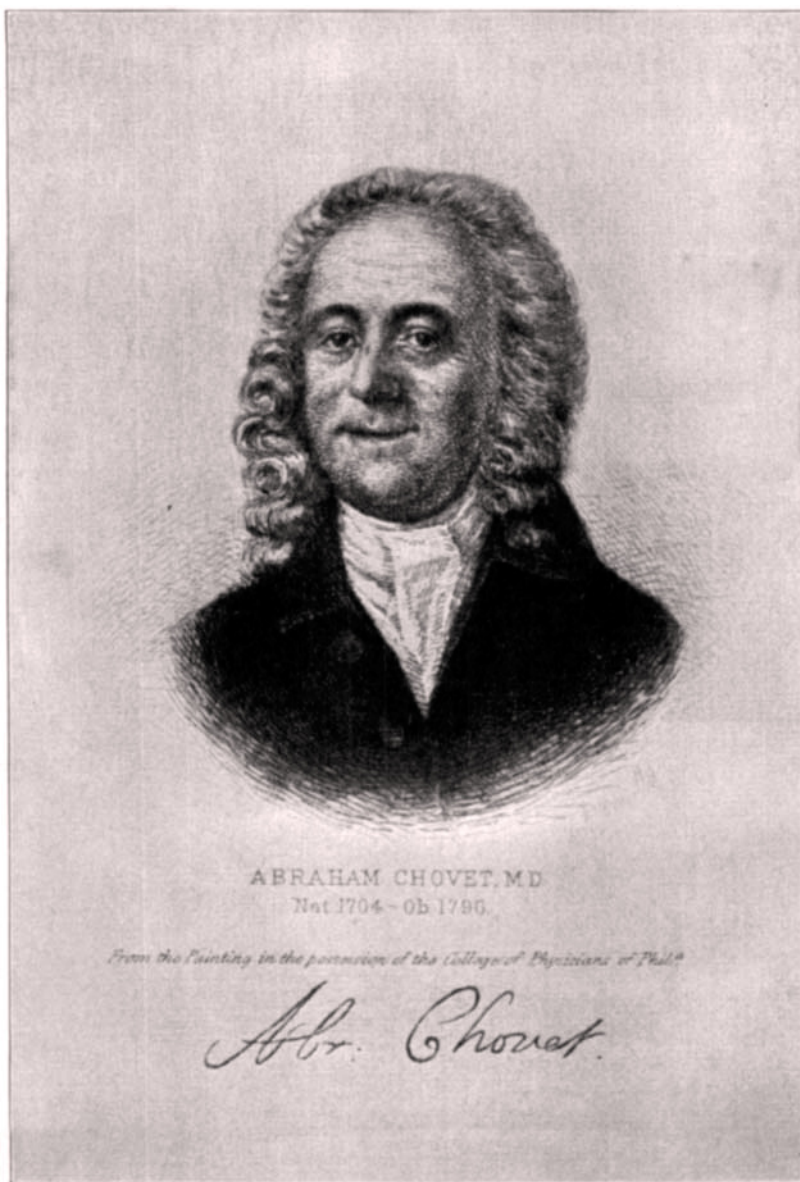
The third solution consists of equal parts of linseed oil and turpentine well rubbed in. It is no disadvantage to apply this solution hot, but very good results are obtained when applied cold.

The black color may not be marked at first, it is often of a dirty green appearance, but this soon gives way to an ebony black.

Subsequent cleaning, at the end of the laboratory courses, may be accomplished by washing with soap and water and when this is dry by applying the turpentine-oil mixture.

This method may be applied to old tables, but it is essential that the old finish—varnish or wax—be entirely removed, down to the fresh wood, either by planing or the use of a caustic potash solution.

Professor Gage, in describing this method in his work on the Microscope ('04), states that it is sometimes called the Danish method or Denmark black finish. He also gives the following references: *Jour. Ap. Micr.*, vol. 1, p. 145; *Bot. Zeit.*, vol. 54, p. 326; *Bot. Gazette*, vol. 24, p. 66; P. A. Fish, *Jour. Ap. Micr.*, vol. 6, pp. 2211–2212.



From the etching by Rosenthal