

# A Better Way To Open Cans

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Do you have trouble opening those large square cans of coffee and sugar used in shipboard galleys? We've all heard tales about Sailors who used a knife, dough cutter or other pointed object to open one of the cans, only to cut themselves on the jagged edge left along the inside lip of the can or on the lid. This problem, however, is a thing of the past for mess-management specialists and food-service attendants aboard USS *Norfolk* (SSN 714).

During a visit aboard *Norfolk* as part of a survey team, I saw a homemade tool that has nearly eliminated all cuts from improperly opened cans. It looks evil but is really harmless. The tool's edges and point aren't sharp enough to cut you, but they slice through large cans of coffee and sugar like a hot knife goes

through butter. As you place the point on the edge of a can's lid and apply a little body weight, the tool starts cutting. The edge of the can and its lid are turned downward during the process. When the job is done, you simply have someone don a pair of cut-resistant gloves and dispose of the lid.

The best news about this tool is that you can make it yourself or have someone else do it for you. *Norfolk* Sailors used three-quarter-inch-round, stainless-steel bar stock to make the tool's "spine," which is about 18 inches long. The stainless steel allows users to keep the tool clean and sanitized. The Sailors

then spot welded a triangle, made of four- or six-gauge stainless steel about 8 inches wide (the width of the square cans), onto the spine.

Perhaps we can't change the shape of the cans we use in the galley, but we can find a better way to open them. ☺

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