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Care of your stiff Collars

Here is some text I was given regarding starching of collars..

Its from a very helpful chap in the USA

For a professional laundry in the UK

Use

Barkers

Head Office: The Laundry, Rear of 3 Dominion Road, Wallisdown,
Bournemouth, Dorset, BH11 8LH

Tel: 01202 291295

Email: sales@barkergroup.info

<https://barkergroup.info/collars/>

One of the most common requests for information we receive is for addresses of laundries which do stiff collars. Unfortunately these are becoming harder and harder to find while at the same time the quality of the laundering itself is declining. It seems that few laundries these days will launder stiff collars to a suitably rigid and glossy finish and those that do still provide a collar laundering service charge almost as much for laundering as it does to buy a new collar.

For many of us, particularly those of us who live outside the U.K. the difficulties involved in getting collars laundered means we are forced to wear modern shirts while being left looking disconsolately at a pile of dirty stiff collars we are unable to get cleaned.

Old fashioned laundries used to have a special type of iron which consisted of heated metal rollers through which the collar was forced. This process apparently both ironed the collar in the round and left the surface with a glossy bright finish. Very few laundries have this equipment any more.

At one time of course, collars were mainly laundered at home, but the knowledge of the methods used to attain the best result has been almost completely lost. You do not need the special equipment found in traditional laundries to get a perfect finish to your collars, but it is a labour intensive process which takes time and more than a little patience. Perhaps it ought to be a required skill for anyone who seeks to join the Guild as a manservant!

The following information was kindly posted on a group message board on the Internet by a gentleman who states that he habitually launders all his own collars at home according to a method taught to him by a retired laundress who used to specialise in laundering stiff collars.

“Wash collars in normal way and leave damp. Mix 2 tablespoons of starch powder with a pint of COLD water. Stir well and leave for a few mins. Put damp collars in one at a time and knead the starch mixture into the collar.

Squeeze out lightly and put to dry- top of radiator or similiar. The collars MUST dry completely. Leave them for at least 24 hours before going onto the next stage.

Now roll the collars into a fairly damp towel and allow to dampen all the way through.

On a well padded surface put the collar face down having sprayed with 'Easiron' or similiar. Press firmly with a hot iron until almost dry. Turn it over and repeat being careful not to scorch. Iron carefully until the collar is perfectly smooth and flat.

If you want a polished surface this can be acheived by wiping over the surface of the freshly ironed collar with a damp cloth lightly rubbed onto a bar of white soap and then gently polish the collar with the tip of a hot iron.

The collar can now be folded into shape, held with a peg and put somewhere warm to harden off. Practice makes perfect but some failures are inevitable.”



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With a little trepidation, I attempted to follow these instructions. I have a large (and growing) pile of collars which I have been unable to get laundered on my occasional trips to the UK. In case of major disaster, I chose a couple of my least favourite style of collar - a style still commercially available, took a deep breath, and took the plunge.

My first surprise was how thin and watery the starch mixture was. It had the appearance and consistency of milk. On my previous failed attempts at home collar laundry, I had followed the instructions on the starch packet and used boiling water. This had usually left me with a mixture with the consistency and appearance of wallpaper paste which caused a terrible mess and which clung to the collars in gobby lumps which then burned as soon as you tried to iron them. This time, the collars were simply soaked in the mixture, and I put them to dry in the airing cupboard.

I left the collars to dry completely, which took some 24 hours. Most of them dried fairly stiff and rigid, but I found some were rather soft - these were new collars that had never been washed before. I simply put these back into the starch mixture, and let them dry again.

The collars were then rolled up into a damp towel and after leaving them to dampen for a few minutes, I sprayed one with an easy-iron spray.

I had placed a dry towel on the ironing board to further pad it, and started ironing the first collar. In order to avoid scorching, I used a low heat on the iron thinking I could increase the heat if it was not effective. I used the setting for wool and to my surprise found that the collar ironed smooth very easily and without any scorching at all. I was soon able to iron the collar perfectly flat and smooth without any trace of creases or wrinkles.

I discovered it is easier to simply lightly run a bar of white soap over the still damp surface of the collar than to mess about with damp cloths. I also discovered that collars scorch very easily when you iron them after putting soap on them. I managed to scorch two of the four collars I was experimenting with. On the other two however, by dint of lightly running the iron over the soaped collar, I was able to produce a beautiful sheen.

I used paperclips to hold the collars into a round shape, and put them back into the airing cupboard overnight.

The end result is quite acceptable. With a little practice I am sure that I will master the technique, but on my first attempt I was able to produce two collars that are perfectly serviceable and with a satisfying shine to their stiff surfaces. It will be necessary to experiment with the process a little, perhaps altering the proportion of starch to water slightly in order to produce the sharpest and stiffest finish. I felt the collars I did today could be a little stiffer - but then is that not a constant refrain? I was using a rice starch, other types of starch powder may require a different proportion of water. I assume the original instructions were given with a corn starch in mind. This may also have been the reason why some of the collars were so soft on being first starched and had to be starched again.

Link to laundry starch

https://www.ebay.co.uk/i/151289359248?chn=ps&displtem=1&adgroupid=43845970296&rlsa_target=pla-327403048478&abclid=1128956&adtype=pla&merchantid=7122894&poi=&googleloc=9041113&device=c&campaignid=856940792&crdt=0

Detachable starched collars became commonly worn on men's shirts around 1850. The idea was to present a clean appearance to the world without the expense of laundering the whole shirt. As the century progressed collars rose and fell in height according to the fashion of the time reaching their most extreme height in the Edwardian era at the very beginning of C20th.

Collars are either double or single meaning simply that they are either one layer worn upright or folded over and therefore double. Double collars are normally seen as less formal than the upright single.

Collars are all attached to the shirt by means of two collar studs. The shirts must have the appropriate stud holes on the neckband which match up with those on the collar. One short one at the back and a longer one at the front.



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We supply the largest variety of separate collars in the world and have them made in two ways. The starched are the most traditional but must be laundered professionally by a company which still uses the original C19th pressing and finishing machines.

First, the basics. A stiff collar is white, made of cotton and starched to such a degree that it has the consistency of balsa wood or thick plastic. If it has been laundered properly, it will have a surface shine and be like polished furniture to the touch. It is, of course, a separate collar and must therefore be used with a collar-less (or tunic) shirt – to which it is attached by means of a short back stud and a long front stud. The size of the collar will be your usual shirt collar size (say, 16 inches), and the size of the neck-band of the shirt will be half an inch less (thus, 15½ inches).

To obtain your tunic shirts – which usually come with one or two separate, soft collars in the same fabric – you will need to visit www.FogeyUnlimited.co.uk

<https://www.fogeyunlimited.co.uk/product/exclusive-to-fogey-unlimited-traditional-collarband-tunic-shirt-for-your-stiff-collar/>

So you have your shirts, your collar studs and your stiff collars. Now comes the difficult part. Putting on your collar and tie. But do not be put off. Although this operation has been known to make grown men weep and Field Marshals to reach for their service revolvers, if you follow my 7 stage plan, all should be well. (And do not give up. Practice helps enormously.)

1. Open up the 3 stud holes at the front and back of the collar. This is essential.
2. > Wearing your shirt with the studs in place and fastened at the neck by the front stud, fix the collar to the shirt by the back stud only.
3. Tie your tie so that it hangs loosely round the outside of the collar.
4. Push your tie under the collar, starting from the middle of the rear and working round to the front.
5. Fasten the right hand side of the collar to the front stud.
6. Tighten and adjust your tie – leaving about 1½ inches to go, so that when finally tightened the knot will be in the middle.
7. Fasten the left-hand side of the collar to the front stud and fully tighten the tie, making such adjustment as is necessary. This is the most difficult stage, particularly with a new or newly laundered collar, as the tie can be very resistant to movement within the fastened collar. (A helpful reader suggests putting a little talcum powder - of the sort used on a baby's posterior - inside

the collar, to ease the movement of the tie. I have not tried this myself, being anxious about the possibility of soiling my neckwear. But it might well be a useful stratagem, if you are having great difficulty.)

A lot of trouble? Of course it is. But most worthwhile things in life are. And once you have mastered the art, you will never want to go back to the slovenly ways of the rest of the world. You will wear your stiff collar with pride, dismissing the stares of the scoffers and quietly proud of the glances of the admiring. And you will be warmed by the knowledge that you have made another step towards your goal of sartorial perfection.

The Stiff starched detachable collar.

The crafting technique requires patience and skill but results in a superior quality of collar that maintains rigidity and style. It begins with the collar shape being hand cut from the finest cotton, this silhouette is then steeped in Chinese rice starch for 24 hours to ensure the utmost strength in rigidity. It is subsequently moved to a gas lit steel roller to create its perfectly fitting shape before it is finally polished to achieve its stylish, shine finish.