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p.34 SPOON
CARVING
BASICS

p.8 KNOW YOUR
TOOLS:
CARVING
TOOLS

p.32 **FREE**
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ISSUE #127
AUGUST/SEPTEMBER 2020

CANADIAN Woodworking & HOME IMPROVEMENT

SPOON FEATURE ISSUE

Make a Simple Spoon p.44

Carve a Curvy Spoon p.22

Create a Löfftel p.40

Learn These 7 Grips p.27

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09



**Teach a Young
Woodworker to Carve Spoons** p. 50



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How to grip a knife is critical for a beginner carver. Learn the basics to carve safely and efficiently.
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34 Spoon and Utensil Making Basics

Learning about the different general approaches to spoon-making will ensure you start off on the right foot. BY ROB BROWN



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editor's letter

It's sometimes funny how things work out. I've been planning this spoon- and utensil-themed issue for more than a year now, and over the past few months COVID-19 has forced many people indoors with time to take up new hobbies or crafts. One hobby that's growing quickly right now is spoon carving. You don't need a lot of expensive tools or equipment, the basic skills are fairly easy to learn and in no time at all, you have something not only useful, but beautiful. On top of that, if you're looking for a creative outlet, spoon making offers a great opportunity to get those design juices flowing, without having to commit to a large furniture project.

Being around wood and tools for the past 30 years, I've made a few spoons. Nothing overly amazing, but they all work well when called upon. In preparation for this issue, I learned quite a bit more about the art of carving spoons. One thing I've realized is that there are a number of general approaches to carving a wooden spoon. You can simply use the tools you have in your shop to make a spoon. In fact, you likely won't even need to do any real carving. Standard machinery will take care of breakout and remove the bulk of the waste, and you can follow up with a selection of hand tools for hollowing the bowl and refining the shape. This is probably the most common approach for someone familiar with woodworking, but new to spoon making. On the other end of the spectrum are greenwood enthusiasts who use hand tools the majority of woodworkers have never owned before to carve a spoon without the use of electricity at all. There really isn't one right way to carve a spoon. I'd recommend keeping your mind open to learning about a new technique or tool, then deciding if that approach is one you'd like to know more about.

I hope these various spoon projects, along with articles about techniques and some of the tools specific to spoon making, will inspire you to get into spoon making. It's a lot of fun for people of all ages and skill levels, and it's one of the simple projects many of us could use in our lives right now.

— Rob Brown



rbrown@canadianwoodworking.com

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Michael Fox
Publisher
mfox@



Paul Fulcher
Advertising Director
pfulcher@



Jennifer Taylor
Subscriber Service
service@



Carl Duguay
Web Editor
cduguay@

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PUBLISHER

Michael Fox

ASSOCIATE PUBLISHER / DIRECTOR OF ADVERTISING

Paul Fulcher

EDITOR

Rob Brown

ART DIRECTOR

Jonathan Cresswell-Jones

CONTRIBUTORS

Kim Dagorne, Willfried Elzner,
Carlos Eric, James Jackson

PROOFREADING

Beckie Fox

FOUNDING PUBLISHERS

Linda Fulcher and Paul Fulcher

SUBSCRIBER SERVICE

Toll free 1-800-204-1773

Email service@canadianwoodworking.com

ADVERTISING

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letters

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I'm a construction teacher by Peterborough. I just received my first free copy of your magazine. I am so excited. I'm a pretty new teacher after having run a contracting business for a decade or so. I've been busy earning my degree, raising my kids, I just built a house for them, and your magazine wasn't really on my radar. I used to get *Fine Homebuilding* but haven't for a couple years. And, it was always slightly irksome reading about American products and American building codes and all the rest of it.

Your magazine looks so deluxe. Great articles, slick ads, I love the whole thing. I can't wait to dig in and join up for a permanent membership once your amazingly generous promotion is over. It looks like it will be a great resource for myself and the students in my classes.

Many thanks, and take care.

Gord W.

Via email

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Enjoy. — Rob Brown, Editor, CW&HI



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Jim Morrison

Via email

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We created a PDF file that lists more than 150 links to help instructors and students get the most from the education subscription: learn.canadianwoodworking.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Canadian-Woodworking-Resource-guide-2020.pdf

— Carl Duguay, Associate Editor

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Thanks again!

Brian Andrews

Via email



shopnews

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Tool Reviews



IRWIN
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Micro Mystery

Can you guess this object commonly found in most shops? Follow us on Instagram and Facebook to see regular close-up photos of common workshop tools and objects.

We will post the answer to this one in our Oct/Nov issue.



Previous issue:
Titebond III glue bottle tip

Best Build

Check out the **Woodworking** section of our forum for our latest "Best Build" thread — a tea cabinet. This month's winner, James Dobson, wins a **Veritas Dual Marking Gauge** from Lee Valley.



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Canadian-Made
Spoons Slideshow

Make a
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Patrick Sullivan



Making a Spokeshave



Forum Thread

Check out these home improvement threads and many others at forum.canadianwoodworking.com

- **Concrete Deck Piers** — One of our forum members poured some concrete piers for his deck, but they didn't turn out as expected. Our members had some advice for him.
- **PVC Boards for Window Flower Box** — Bringing soil, moisture and plants up against a house has its challenges, but there are things you can do to work around these problems.

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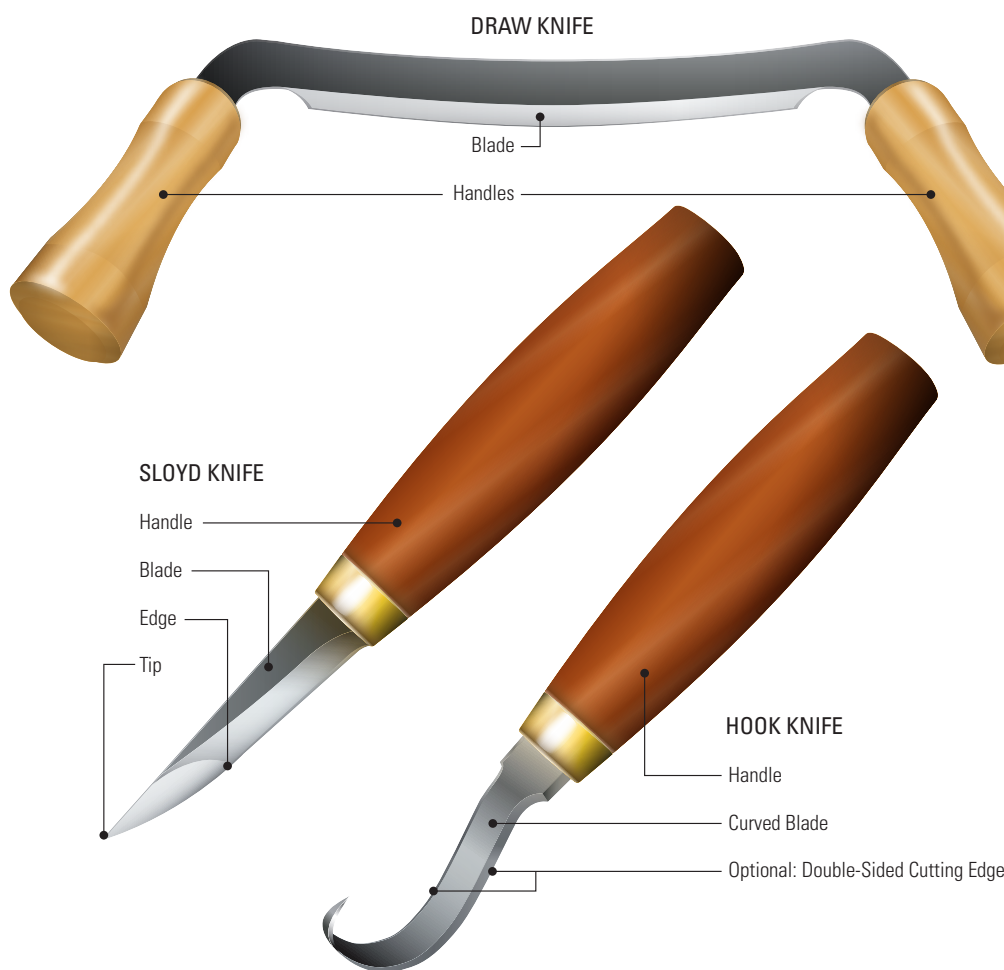


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Spoon-Carving Tools



Draw Knife: Handles are grasped with both hands, on either side of the blade. Used for quick and rough stock removal. Usually used when roughing out a spoon blank or other workpiece. Works similarly to a spokeshave, but can take off more material with each pass.

Sloyd Knife: Inspired by a Swedish word referring to a system of hand-crafted education, a sloyd knife has a flat blade that is relatively long. The cutting edge is generally straight or very slightly curved, and the blade has a slight taper to it. It also has a simple handle. A sloyd knife is used single-handed to further fine tune the overall shape of a spoon as the user removes small shavings. Generally, very simple knives.

Hook Knife: Used to hollow out the bowl area of a spoon or create any small recess in a piece of wood. Its blade is curved, and is used single-handed to remove wood shavings. Available in different radiuses. Some hook knives' blades have a varying radius. Hook knives are available with single- or double-sided blades.

Draw Knife

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Sloyd Knife

Common Blade Length: 2" – 3"

Price: \$20 - \$70

Hook Knife

Common Radius: 1/2" – 1-1/4"

Price: \$20 - \$90

Get the Most Out of Your Spoon-Carving Tools

Keep It Sharp

A sharp blade is a safe blade. It's also a joy to use. Many come very sharp, but learning how to re-sharpen a blade is important for long-term success.

Thin Shavings

Generally speaking, these tools work better, and the process is more enjoyable, if you take more small shavings, rather than fewer heavy shavings.

Don't Pry

Continue the cut right through the workpiece, rather than stopping early and prying the shaving off. Prying will damage your razor-sharp blade.

Protect Yourself

Whether it means learning how to properly use a knife or wearing protective gloves and an apron, you don't want to cut yourself. Everyone has a different comfort level.

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Top **10** Spoon and Utensil Embellishments

Though wooden spoons and utensils can be left very simply adorned, adding a little “je ne sais quoi” takes them from a simple kitchen item to a piece of art.

BY ROB BROWN



1 Chip Carving – Especially common on wide handles, chip carving is a classic way to add detail and intrigue to a spoon or utensil. Because chip carving is an art in itself, I’d recommend practicing your technique and pattern on a scrap before moving to a freshly carved spoon.

2 Pyrography – For adding the user’s initial, a geometric pattern or a shape from nature, a pyrography pen can really heat up your next utensil project.

3 Laminating Multiple Contrasting Species – Just as it does for furniture, bringing two or more species of wood together in one project can add a pleasing effect. The options are almost endless.

4 Texturing – Equipping a rotary tool with the right round bit can leave dimples in the wood. Parting tools will add grooves in the wood. Using a file to add a few small notches near the edge of two surfaces also works wonders. These are just a few of the many ways to add texture to your wooden utensil.

5 Leaving Tool Marks On – Some woodworkers would rather sand the carved surfaces of a spoon smooth, but if you’re using razor-sharp tools and leaving smooth facets or surfaces, leaving them alone offers a more natural, hand-carved look.

6 Wrap the Handle – Twine, copper wire and other materials can be wrapped around the handle, creating an obvious place to grasp the spoon or utensil. Although they’re usually added strictly for aesthetic reasons, they can turn an otherwise simple object into a piece of art.

7 Paint – A few layers of contrasting milk paint and sanding through one or more layers will add a powerful visual to your wooden utensil. Applying paint on top of a textured surface will add to the effect. Spray or other types of paints can also be used to add a bold colour to the wood.

8 Stain – Staining a portion of the handle is a simple way to add contrast to your spoon. Applying tape to mark a border could work with some stains. Carving a V-groove between stained and non-stained areas is another way to keep the stain from bleeding into an area where it shouldn’t be.

9 Pierced Carving – Commonly used to decorate the wide handles of Welsh and Celtic spoons, pierced carving offers a wide range of possibilities for adorning a wooden spoon.

10 Kolrosing – Never heard of this traditional Scandinavian decorative technique that involves scoring lines into wood, then using oil and darker pigments to highlight the small grooves? You’re in luck. Turn to page 55 to read about it.



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RELATED ARTICLES: Children’s Blocks (Dec/Jan 2012), Pierced Carving (Feb/Mar 2012), 12 Ways to Add Texture With Tools You Already Have (Feb/Mar 2013)

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Steve Hanley
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Eating spoons

Walnut
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Spalted Maple
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Photo by Danica Heaton



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Montreal, QC
Eating spoon

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Dennis Duermeier
Summerside, PEI
Coffee scoops

Etsy: PEI WoodenSpoon



Sharpening SPOON-CARVING TOOLS

with Wet/Dry Sandpaper

Learn about the different options for sharpening your spoon-carving tools, then take a deep dive into using wet/dry abrasive paper to put a keen edge on your tools.

BY CARLOS ERIC

Greenwood carving can be a journey of self-discovery and rewarding experiences, giving you a profound appreciation for nature. There is something very therapeutic and primal about slicing at a piece of wood that you found in the woods, using a sharp knife to glide effortlessly through the wood grain.

Carving with a dull knife, however, is not only a frustrating experience but a potentially dangerous one. If you find yourself trying to force your way through good grain with a dull knife, it's easy to

Photos by Carlos Eric

make a mistake, get frustrated and slip. An unexpected slip out of the wood grain will not only damage the piece you're working on, but you could injure yourself as well.

To carve a spoon from greenwood, the three core items most carvers use are an axe, a sloyd knife and a hook knife, all of which can be sharpened using similar principles.

Sharpening your hand tools is a separate discipline from wood carving, but entirely necessary to learn. It can take many years to master, and there are a few different ways to approach this discipline. I will show you simple and proven ways to get a shaving-sharp edge on your tools using affordable and easily purchased materials.

Different methods

There are many ways to approach sharpening hand tools, whether with the assistance of a machine or completely by hand. I tend to use a mixture of hand and machine sharpening using the methods I outline here.

Tormek Sharpening System

The Tormek sharpening system is extremely helpful for sharpening axes, straight knives and other hand tools, because it only takes mere minutes to get a shaving-sharp edge. It has several different jigs so it can be used for many different tools from hand plane blades and knives to scissors and drill bits. The stone wheel can be changed from 220 to 1000 grit with the assistance of a stone grader giving you the ability to reprofile an edge or simply give it a touch-up. There are other brands out there which can accomplish the same thing and vary in price, but you will get what you pay for.

Pros: Quick, efficient and easy to use once you learn the basics. It will get a wide variety of your tools shaving sharp so you can continue to work on your wood carving without long sharpening sessions.

Cons: Expensive. You will need a set, stable area for it. You don't get a pretty mirror polish on the bevel with the included stone wheel.

Water Stones

Water stones are an age-old method for sharpening edges. They come in a variety of different grits and are easy to use once you get the hang of them. They need to be soaked in water before use, continuously moistened during use and placed in a proper holder while being used.

Pros: They are affordable, easily purchased online or at your local dealer, convenient to have around and come in a variety of different grits.

Cons: Very messy and need to be flattened if used often, as the material will wear away unevenly, not good when you are trying to achieve a flat bevel.

Diamond Plate Stones

Diamond plate stones are a great investment as they do not erode over time. They come in a variety of different grits just like water stones and work well if you invest in good quality ones. They are also portable in the sense that they are much thinner than water stones, yet durable enough to carry in your kit.

Pros: Invest in a good set and they will last you a long time. You generally get what you pay for.

Cons: They can be very expensive depending on quality and grit. Need to be flattened if used a lot.

Wet/Dry Sandpaper

Wet/dry sandpaper is an affordable way to sharpen a variety of tools. You can go up to an insane level of grit, depending on how much you want to invest, meaning you can get an unbelievable mirror polish on your bevels. You will not need that kind of mirror polish to do regular spoon carving, however, sometimes it is just nice to give your tool a deluxe treatment. You can buy the paper in bulk cheaply online and simply dispose of any used-up sheets. Wet/dry sandpaper is also the most readily available method to properly sharpen a hook knife as well. This last method is the main method I use, and it is also the method I will be walking you through in detail below.

Pros: Affordable and accessible to all. A wide variety of grits available. Can be used for sharpening sloyd knives, hook knives and a variety of other tools. The paper is portable.

Cons: Unless you find some good quality, adhesive-backed stuff, it can sometimes be tricky getting it to adhere to a surface.

Sharpening, in a nutshell

The principle of sharpening is relatively simple, but can take time to get right. Simply put, you will make enough passes on your sharpener, on your first bevel until enough material is removed that a burr is raised, and then repeat for the other side. This burr will be a wire edge that you sometimes cannot see with the naked eye, but you can feel. Once you have this burr, you can take it up to the level of grit that you desire and finish it off on your leather strops.

There are two strops that I use: One is suede leather with a coating of honing compound and one is a thin, durable, smooth leather. This last stage of the sharpening process is very important as it removes any remnants of the raised burr so that you can have the smoothest cuts possible.

Required equipment

To hand sharpen with wet/dry sandpaper you will need some basic, affordable equipment that can be purchased in many hardware stores and online.

An assortment of wet/dry sandpaper: Depending on whether there is any major damage to the edge that needs to be repaired, you can usually start at 800 grit and go lower or higher, depending on the condition of the blade. You can go as high as you wish. Usually 3000 grit is more than enough to give you a nice mirror polish on the bevel. There are some manufacturers that sell grits with a sticky adhesive already on the backs. This makes it easier to attach your grits to the dowels and blocks used for sharpening.

A wooden dowel: This is used to sharpen, hone and strop the inside of a hook knife. You will wrap different levels of grit around the dowel to accomplish this. On the other end, you can apply your honing compound. As for the size of the dowel, it is better to have a circumference which is going to hug the inside curvature snugly, allowing you to easily cover more of the surface when making your strokes.

A flat block: You can use a variety of objects (dense hardwood, plastic, glass) as long as they're dense and flat. Adhere the sandpaper to the flat block to achieve a true, flat bevel when you sharpen.

Leather strops, one suede and one smooth: These can easily be purchased online or you can make them yourself. I recommend trying to make your own as it can be a fun little project, and you can make them whatever size you wish. You simply need strong, thin



Black it Out – Adding black marker to the edge you’re going to sharpen will give you a very strong visual so you can keep the blade positioned properly while you sharpen.

leather, flat wooden surfaces cut to the size of your choice, and some adhesive (such as contact cement). Adhere the strips, one smooth leather and one suede, to the wooden surfaces and trim any excess material.

Honing compound: This can be found online or in specialty stores. They come in different grits, usually medium, fine and extra fine. This is used in the honing process, rubbed into the suede strop or onto a flat piece of wood.

Black felt marker: This helps a lot with keeping the bevel flat while you sharpen. Black out the entire part of the blade you need to sharpen. You can then do a test pass to see if you’re removing the material on the correct portion of the blade.

A light adhesive: This is used to adhere the sandpaper to your flat block. As you will be using two hands to pass your tool over your sharpening block, you cannot have your sandpaper moving about. I use two-sided tape, one thin strip on top of the grit and one on the bottom. This keeps everything in place for me. You can also use a spray adhesive, but this method can get somewhat messy and you will need to have acetone on hand to wipe the block clean after each grit.



Adhere the Grit – Working from roughest to finest, attaching the grits to a glass plate will ensure a hard and flat surface for sharpening. In a perfect world you would have multiple glass plates to attach all the grits to, so you don’t have to remove low grits, and attach higher grits as you work.



Different Grits – Eric cuts his wet/dry sandpaper grits to size at the start of the process. He typically uses grits between 800 and 3000, but that depends on the state of the blade. A rougher grit may be necessary to remove nicks in the blade.

Another alternative is wrapping the grit around the block, holding this in one hand and making the passes with your blade in the other.

Clamp or holding device: This is optional, but it helps to keep your sharpening block or strops in place.

Sharpening a sloyd knife

Black out the bevel of your blade with the felt tip marker. I highly recommend this as it will be the best way to see if you are getting an even grind on the bevel as you make your passes.

Select the grits you’re going to work with. Cut them to size, then lay them out neatly, ready to be used. It helps to write the grits on the back of the sandpaper so you don’t lose track as you progress.

Attach your first grit to your flat block. You will not need much, but it is up to you. Typically, a square is all you need to give the blade a nice touch up.

Dab the grit square with a little drop of water. This helps the grit last longer as you sharpen your blade.

Whether you’re sitting or standing, it’s best to have your arms firmly against your sides at about a 90° angle. This makes it easier to make even, consistent passes.



A Few Drops – A few drops of water is all Eric puts on his wet/dry sandpaper before sharpening his blade.



Starting Position – Start with the portion of the blade nearest the handle in contact with the abrasive. Hold the handle loosely, and apply some pressure to the bevel of the blade, ensuring the bevel is flat on the abrasive.

Hold your blade by the handle lightly with one hand and press your bevel flat onto the grit with the other. If you press onto the blade you can feel the moment where the bevel is flat against your block.

This is the part that takes some getting used to. Generally speaking, you will be holding the handle lightly with one hand, but doing the majority of the holding and sharpening by pressing the bevel flat and holding the blade itself with the other hand.

Make even passes over the grit, from the part of the blade near the hilt all the way to the tip. Take care not to push into the grit as you will cut it. Due to the way these blades are shaped, you will have to raise the handle slightly as you make your passes to ensure you are making it all the way to the tip evenly. The tip is the most critical part to get even and sharp, as that's what you use to make fine cuts on your carvings. Make an even number of passes on both sides of the blade, generally until all of the marker has been removed.

You can make passes by holding the bevel firm onto the grit near the hilt, and dragging it down in one smooth motion until you reach the tip or you can make little stabbing motions into the grit, riding the bevel until you have removed all the marker. Both methods take some practice and it is just a matter of what you are comfortable with.

Once you've worked your way up to your highest grit, make a few passes on your strops, first suede with honing compound and then smooth leather, to remove any burr. Usually about 10 passes on each side should do the trick and you should now have a beautiful, polished, shaving-sharp edge.

As you carve, be sure to frequently strop your blade. This will ensure that your blade stays super sharp for much longer, so you will not need to do a major sharpening session like this for a while.

Sharpening a hook knife

When you're sharpening a hook knife, you're only going to take the grit to the inside of the hook and never the outside. The reason for this is that you do not want to alter the outside edge geometry of the blade as it has been designed that way by the blacksmith or manufacturer to serve its specific function of hollowing out spoon bowls.



A Slight Tilt – As you approach the tip of the blade you have to raise the handle of the knife slightly, and keep the bevel of the blade in contact with the abrasive.



Strop, With Compound – Eric makes passes on a suede strop that's been loaded with honing compound between grits of sandpaper. This removes any wire burr that was created.



Shiny and Sharp – The final step is a few passes over a leather strop. This should provide you with a shiny blade that's very sharp.



Mark the Hook Knife – As with the sloyd knife, a black marker will help you clearly see where you're removing material from your blade.



Starting Position – Hold the knife lightly in your non-dominant hand and the dowel with sandpaper in your dominant hand. Holding the knife lightly is absolutely key as it allows the knife to rock back and forth freely as you make your strokes, adhering to the dowel and staying flat.

This is very similar to the first step of the sloyd knife sharpening process. Select which grits you will use, cut them to appropriate size, then lay them out neatly and in order. They should be wide and long enough to cover the surface of the dowel and hold onto it. Having wet/dry sandpaper with adhesive on the back makes this much easier. If you do not have adhesive-backed grits, just make the grit strips big enough so you can hold them on the dowel manually. You can also put an elastic band around the bottom of the grit to keep it in place.

Black out the inside of the hook with your permanent marker. You only need to add lines to near the edge and to the back. Do this for each stage of your grits and for the stropping as well. This is done so when you make your passes, you can correct yourself as you make your strokes to ensure that they are as even as possible. Not having even strokes can round the inside of your blade and affect the edge geometry in a negative way. Keeping things flat



Finishing Position – As you move the dowel and abrasive toward the top of the knife, rock the handle upwards. You will immediately see where you've sharpened the blade, as black marker will be removed from that portion of the blade. Adjust your pressure to evenly sharpen the knife.

on the inside allows for more efficient sharpening. Also, having a rounded inside bevel is difficult to correct so it's best to avoid.

As with the sloyd knife, it's best to keep your arms at a relaxed 90° angle, and somewhat tight to your sides. This will enable you to make even passes with your grit. Working on an elevated wooden block makes it easier to make the following movements.

Place your hook knife on your wooden block, holding the handle in an underhand fashion lightly with your non-dominant hand. The idea is to make even passes with your dowel using your dominant hand, starting at the top of the dowel, at the top of the hook near the handle, and pushing forward towards the tip of the hook. As you push forward with the dowel, keep it straight and lift the handle of the hook knife, allowing you to cover the entire inside surface of the hook with one stroke.

In between making passes with your grits, give it some quick stropping on the outside of the hook to remove any burr.

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Strop the Hook Knife

– With the flatter section of the blade in contact with the strop, start to move the blade away from you. After a short distance on the flatter edge, start to rock the handle of the hook knife upwards, honing the curved portion of the blade. Still moving away from yourself, rock the knife up onto the tip of its blade. Fairly light pressure is needed, and practice will make this operation easier. The area near the tip of the blade is important for spoon bowl carving, so don't neglect it during this stage, even if it's not easy to do.

To strop the outside of your hook knife, start close to the handle, on the flatter portion of the blade. As you move the knife away from you rock the handle upwards, stropping the curved portion, then the tip. With a bit of practice, you can perform this operation in one pass.

Take this up to the level of grit that you desire to obtain a razor-sharp knife.

Sharpness test

To ensure you have not left any nicks or burr on the edges, you can perform a simple sharpness test with paper. Holding a paper firmly upright, slice through it with your blade. It should glide through smoothly without any catches or tears.

While it is possible to carve spoons with duller tools, it's always the best policy to keep them as sharp as possible. Not only does this

enable you to have a more enjoyable experience carving, it's also much safer.

There are two stages to carving a spoon from greenwood. First, take the spoon blank and shape it as close as possible into a finished spoon. Next, allow the item to dry and apply your finishing cuts. It is most important to have your knife as sharp as possible for these finishing cuts, as it allows you to leave beautiful, smooth facet marks on your items. A dull knife will turn out of the wood on long slices, but a sharp knife will enable you to make long, smooth cuts down the handle of your spoon or on the back of your spoon bowl.

While hand sharpening your tools is a challenging and altogether separate discipline from carving spoons, it is a necessary skill to master. No matter how sharp your brand-new tool is, sooner or later you will need to sharpen it. Using these simple steps will allow you to properly sharpen your tools and not have to worry about ruining them in the process.

These techniques can also be used on other hand tools, such as chisels, scissors and axe heads. Over time, you may learn to love this discipline. Sharpening and honing the edges of your tools can be a very rewarding and enjoyable experience, and you will only get better with practice.



Sharpness Test – A quick sharpness test with paper is a great way to see if you have left any burrs or chips on the knife edge. The knife should glide cleanly and smoothly right through the paper without catching or tearing it.



CARLOS ERIC

carlos@9homeworlds.com



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Carve a Curvy Spoon

Great for measuring ground coffee or mixing up a few ingredients, this spoon has enough curves to also catch everyone's eye.

BY ROB BROWN

My thoughts on designing this spoon mainly included two words: simple and curvy. Spoons aren't too hard to make, and they don't take a lot of time. A very straightforward spoon could have been completed in half the time, but an extra hour or two is all that was needed to transform a basic spoon into something much sleeker.

I searched the internet for some basic spoon shapes I liked, then adjusted them to suit my tastes. In the end, I brought a few features from three different spoons together, then tweaked the design further while I worked. Wood shaped in three dimensions always looks different in real life, as opposed to in my mind, and I didn't shy away from making aesthetic changes on the fly. Worst thing that can happen is I waste a few hours, and a tiny piece of cherry, before starting again.

Material selection and orientation

Since this spoon wasn't going to be doing any heavy lifting, I opted for black cherry, a softer hardwood. Everyone loves the rich, red colour of cherry, especially as it ages. The piece I chose was very straight grained, and I also made sure to use a quarter-cut piece of stock so the grain along the upper face of the spoon, as well as throughout the bowl of the spoon, was straight.

Sizing it up

Spoons come in just about any size, but this spoon is on the small side. Its overall length is 7-1/2". The height at the end of the handle is 9/16". The heights at the neck and bowl are 3/8" and 1/2", respectively. The width of the bowl is 1-7/16". The widths at the neck and tip of the handle are 5/16" and 1/2". Using these measurements will give you a spoon similar in size to mine, but feel free to make any adjustments.

A different approach

Once a spoon is rough shaped it's hard to hold in a vise. The concave bowl area of the spoon was where I started, and by working on this area first I could ensure it was evenly shaped and properly smoothed, while still held firmly in my vise. This isn't the most common method for carving a spoon, but it worked well for me. Many spoon carvers will use a carving gouge to systematically work around the bowl area, removing wood chips and creating the cavity.

Rather than hog out the bowl with hand tools, I opted for a more aggressive approach: my router, equipped with a reasonably large, round-tipped bit. I'm sure some would say that's overkill, but it took me only about 15 seconds to remove the vast majority of material to form the bowl. Probably a wash when you factor in setup time, but if I were making two or more spoons I'm

Quick Stock Removal – Though you have to ensure the surface you're routing on is supportive enough, and you don't remove too much material at once, using a router and round-bottomed bit can speed the process of removing much of the material to create the bowl.



sure my approach would have been faster, though speed isn't everything.

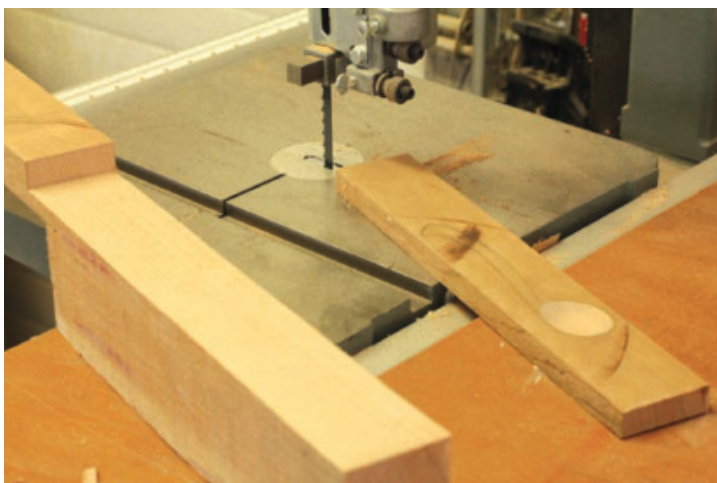
With the outline of the bowl drawn clearly, I guided the router free-hand around the area, being careful the router didn't tip and the bit didn't grab. If I were making dozens of the same style of spoon, a plywood template, along with a template guide secured to the base of my router, would make for a great production line.

Reaching for a properly sized carving gouge, I used it to take the burn marks out of the bowl, as well as the last bit of material. I worked right up to the pencil line. If you're aiming for the spoon to hold a certain measurement, like a teaspoon for example, this is the time to check. Sugar or salt, and a proper measuring spoon, will allow you to easily see how much volume your spoon can hold. If it's too small, you can fine-tune it with a gouge or go back to the router if you're not even close to your goal.

Once you're sure of the volume, you have two options, and both are personal preference. Either smooth the bowl with 80 grit sandpaper, followed by finer grits up to 150 or so, or use your carving gouge to ensure a smooth, slightly faceted surface, and



Shaping the Bowl – Brown used a few different carving gouges to shape and smooth the inner surface of the bowl. If it's important for the spoon you're working on, now is the time to consider the volume the spoon will hold. Testing with a proper measuring spoon and white sugar will give you precise answers.



Resaw the Blank – Now that the bowl has been shaped, Brown cuts the spoon blank away from the rest of the piece of lumber.



Trim One End – Rather than bandsawing the entire spoon from the blank, leave the simpler end full-width. This will allow you to clamp the blank in your vise or down to your workbench while you work on it.



Rough it Out – A disc sander is a great machine to rough out parts of the spoon freehand. Just be careful, as it can remove wood faster than you'd think.



Fair the Curves – The flat surface of a belt sander will help with outside edges of curves, while using its rounded end will assist with inside curves. While a belt sander won't remove a limb, it's more than happy to instantly remove skin from your fingers.

skip the sandpaper altogether. I opted for the carved surface with this spoon. If you sand, try not to ease the transition between the bowl and the upper face of the rim too much in the process.

Remove the spoon blank

Until now, I have been working on the piece of cherry as a whole, but now it's time to remove the spoon blank from the larger piece of wood. I drew a line on the edge of the piece of wood, slightly wider than the final depth of the spoon.

I like to keep the handle portion of the spoon blank at full width at this point, as it's easier to clamp in my vise while I shape the business end of the spoon, from the neck to the tip. Although it's sometimes the opposite, I find the bowl end of the spoon is the hardest to shape, so this is why I take this approach. I cut the waste from the bowl end of the spoon on my bandsaw, though a scroll saw would work nicely if you have tight turns of inside corners to deal with.

More shaping

Time to focus on removing some of the wood around the bowl of the spoon. Using mainly my disc sander, I started to remove some

material freehand, being careful to keep my hands away from the abrasive paper and respect the rotation of the disc. A belt sander on edge would also do a good job with this. Removing this material helped me visualize how it was going to look when it was done. I removed about 3/4 of the material and left the rest for later. It's easy to remove more wood later, but it's impossible to glue wood back on in a shaped project like this.

At this point I erased most of the handle pencil lines and used a French curve to sort out a more accurate handle shape. The tip of the handle was the most finicky. I still left the handle tip material on for clamping purposes.

Next was the side profile of the spoon. The handle is about 9/16" at the end, and tapers to about 3/8" at the neck. I used a chisel to remove much of the waste, followed by a spokeshave to trim to a pencil line I added to the side of the handle and neck. Using an assortment of hand tools, I worked on the neck area of the spoon, and started to smooth the handle a bit more. I wanted to do as much rough shaping as possible with the spoon blank still clamped in my vise.



Use What You Have – Brown pressed the flat upper surface of his partially completed spoon against the front edge of his workbench so he could shape the handle's curved tip. Because of the small size of a spoon, you may need to get creative when shaping it.



Gentle Transitions – Although spoons don't need to look great to work well, it's the finer points of shaping them that create a pleasing final product. Transitions are always important, as this area between the neck and underside of the bowl shows.

A final trim

Back at the bandsaw, I trimmed all of the waste off the handle, then got to work smoothing and fairing the curves of the handle. I used a belt sander, chisel, spokeshave, file and hand sanding block to further refine the handle. I found it hard just keeping the spoon stationary so I could work on it. Putting the spoon up against the edge of my workbench, or somewhat loosely securing it in my vise, worked okay.

One of the tricky parts of shaping this blank into a visually appealing spoon was the transition from neck to the back of the bowl. Most spoons are symmetrical, though this spoon isn't. The user rarely sees the underside of the spoon, but I didn't think that was an excuse to slack off on refining that area. I used a file to get a somewhat crisp and undercut transition on the one side of the neck, and also allow the neck to extend into the bowl area of the spoon before it becomes one with the bowl.

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The Finer Points – A gently curved reveal at this transition creates a nice sense of flow from one part of the spoon to the next. Brown scored a line, then used a chisel to remove some material on one side of the scored line.

Embellishments

I found the transition between the neck and the bowl a bit heavy and blunt. I didn't plan for this in the initial design, but I opted to create a slightly curved reveal to add a lighter touch to this area. Working on the fly can be great, though I risked making a mess of an otherwise pretty decent spoon. Whoever says spoon making isn't living on the edge just doesn't realize the truth.

I drew a very gentle "S" curve onto the upper face of the neck, scored it to create a clear line to end at, and used a sharp chisel to pare away the waste on one side of the score line. I also removed a bit of material off the upper face of one side of the bowl rim to even the transition.

I then added a few notches across the grain of the handle. This was strictly a visual I liked, and doesn't serve any purpose. If you wanted to use your imagination a bit, these grooves could assist with grip as the user manipulates the spoon, but I think the curved end is more than enough to assist with grip.

Finishing the spoon

I applied two coats of "Tried & True Traditional Varnish Oil", allowing ample dry time after each coat. This brought out the grain and colour nicely, and added protection. I could have left it as-is at this stage, but decided not to. The finish penetrated into the wood, and I wanted a slight film finish on this spoon. It was going to be used to scoop ground coffee beans into an espresso maker, and I



Apply a Finish – For enhancing the colour and grain, and adding some long-term protection, a finish can be applied. A wiping varnish was what Brown applied, followed by a few very light coats of shellac.

thought the grounds might be more likely to seep into, and discolour, the spoon over time. I applied a few very light coats of shellac to the spoon, quickly wiping a coat on, allowing it to dry for a few minutes, then applying a second thin coat. I used a cloth to apply both the varnish oil and the shellac, then disposed of those cloths properly.

A quick buff with some #0000 steel wool was all that was needed to prep this spoon for its all-important task of filling an espresso maker with fresh ground coffee for the rest of its life. Come to think of it, this might be the most important wooden object I've ever made.

Although Rob has only had about 10 coffees in his life, those around him enjoy it on a regular basis, and will put this spoon to good use. Sharing a spoon with others is the best part of making one.



ROB BROWN

rbrown@canadianwoodworking.com

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Fuji Spray Mini-Mite Platinum 4

Sponsored: Looking for something powerful, yet lightweight and portable? Look no further than the FUJI SPRAY Mini-Mite PLATINUM 4. This HVLP system comes with all the necessary components: a non-bleed spray gun (choose from 3 models), a 4-stage turbine that delivers a PSI of 9 in a solid case that uses Noise Reduction Covers to minimize noise and a Heat Dissipation Chamber to prevent over-heating, along with a 25 ft. Hi-Flex hose. It works incredibly well with a variety of coatings, including varnishes, stains and even thicker viscosity items like milk paints. Great in a shop or on the go. Learn more at FujiSpray.com/mini-mite.



7 Great KNIFE GRIPS To Get You Started

Knives are simple tools that can do so much, but learning the basic grips will ensure you carve efficiently and safely. Grab some scrap and start making some wood chips.

BY ROB BROWN

Carving everything from wooden spoons to animal caricatures is a lot of fun, doesn't require much space, and the tools needed are fairly simple and cost effective. The only thing stopping you from carving your next work of art is a bit of knowledge about how to hold and use these carving knives. Although the knives can be used very safely, there are a few basics you'll need to know.

Different knife grips are needed to efficiently remove large amounts of material, create gentle and tight curves, and refine the shape of a spoon. Different grips will also allow you to deal with different grain directions.

Reduce movement

Many things are done to minimize movement of the knife – keeping your elbows tucked into your sides, a forearm contacting the side of your leg or your stomach, and the workpiece on your leg or against your stomach are all techniques to help you control the knife properly. Some grasps and techniques allow you to not follow these basic guidelines, but they are the exception, not the rule.

A few basic tips:

- It's important to be mindful and consider where your body is when using these sharp tools.
- Seldom should you position a workpiece for carving in the area between your legs. Major veins and arteries are located on the inside of the legs.
- The workpiece is very often rested on the top of the leg, towards your knee. This helps keep the workpiece stationary during cuts. Just ensure your leg isn't in the knife's path when the knife exits the workpiece.
- Small cuts are generally better than large ones, though an experienced carver can safely remove large amounts of wood with a single knife pass.
- "Towards body" and "Away from body" grips can both be accomplished safely, contrary to popular belief. The first three grips listed here use "Away from body" grips, while the next three employ a "Towards the body" grip. The final grip is different from the first six grips.
- Cut slowly to practice and improve your knifework.
- These grips are explained as if you were right handed.

Start slowly

It's impossible to give complete guidance and explanation of the grips here. Practice making light cuts, using only a small amount of pressure, before adding more strength and power. If you feel your hand trembling with energy as you wait for the knife to finally remove a chip of wood, you're likely removing too much wood at once, are using a dull blade or are using one of these grips incorrectly. It's when a blade explodes free of a workpiece that damage can happen to the workpiece, the knife or the user. We can easily grab a new workpiece or purchase a new knife, but you certainly don't want to injure yourself.

GRIPS

Elbow Grip (also called the forehand grip) – Thumb underneath the handle, fingers wrapped over top of handle. Angling the knife is a more efficient use of the blade and its cutting geometry. Use your right knee to support the work. Start the cut with the portion of the blade closest to the handle, moving the cutting action towards the tip of the knife during the cut. Most of the movement comes from the right elbow joint. This is a common grip when carving spoons, but it's not overly powerful.



Elbow Grip – Probably the most natural for most people, the elbow grip isn't great for anything in particular, but is good for many types of cuts. The movement comes from the elbow joint.



Two Basic Holds – For most of these grips, the knife is held in the palm of your hand, with your thumb wrapped around one side and your four fingers wrapped around the other side. The main difference is whether the blade edge is pointing away (above) or towards (below) you.



Power Grip – This is a slight variation of the elbow grip. Straighten your right elbow and have the movement come from your shoulders and upper back. Use your right knee to support the work. This is a much more powerful grip than the elbow grip. With experience, it's easy to remove relatively large amounts of material with this grip.



Power Grip – As the name implies, the power grip can be used for removing lots of material at once. The movement comes from the shoulder and upper back area.



Thumb Push Grip – Brown uses this grip for making smaller, refined cuts, especially when working on curved surfaces or creating the smooth facets of a finished spoon.

Thumb Push Grip – Though there are a few slight variations on how you hold your knife, they all have the edge of the blade facing away from your body. Grasp the workpiece with your left hand with your left thumb raised slightly above the workpiece. Place your left thumb on the back of the blade or on the back of the handle, very close to the blade. The workpiece is usually held in mid-air. The knife is essentially positioned, angled and rotated by your right hand, while your left thumb provides much of the power. Push with your left thumb to make short, controlled cuts. The knife doesn't move forward without your left thumb pushing it, so this is a safe and controlled grip that's often used for either carving tighter curves or for making smooth, finished cuts on the spoon's surface. You can regularly reposition your left hand to cut further along the workpiece. A variation includes slightly rotating the knife with your right hand, causing the knife to pivot around the end of your left thumb. Although your left arm is quite tight to your body, your right elbow is usually free to rotate and move around a bit. Your right arm isn't generating the power, so this is much less dangerous.



Scissor Grip – Although it looks awkward, once you try this grip you may be surprised by how powerful and controlled it can be. Keep your elbows tight to your body while using this grip.

Scissor Grip – Also called the backhand or palm up grip, the scissor grip starts with the user holding the blade so the edge of the blade is facing them, though strangely the cutting action actually takes place when the blade moves away from the user. Both hands are then rotated inwards, so your palms are facing upward, before any cuts are made. Start with both palms facing upward. Keep the inside edge of your right hand, or the inner edge of your right forearm, pressed against your chest or stomach. Your left forearm and elbow are generally pressed against your chest or stomach. You should be able to see most of your fingernails while you use this grip. This is a powerful grip for removing large amounts of material, but it also provides you with a fair bit of control.

Pull Grip – Also called the backhand grip, it's relatively easy to use and safe, though if done incorrectly this grip can be dangerous. This grip is used while working towards your body. One critical thing to remember is to always have the tip of the knife pointed away from yourself. Another important aspect of this grip is that the heel of your right thumb and palm must come into contact with your body before the knife. This stops the knife's

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Pull Grip – Brown uses this grip quite often, but is sure to keep the tip of the blade pointing away from his body.

motion, eliminating any chance of injury. While holding the end of the workpiece in your left hand, press the opposite end into the sternum area of your body. Your thumb can wrap under the handle or be placed over the handle, beside the index finger. Using medium pressure, the inside of your right forearm should be pressed into your side during cuts, further reducing the chances of losing control of the knife. This can be a very controlled cut, and can be used both to smooth relatively flat surfaces and to further refine curves. It can also be used to remove larger amounts of material. Another benefit of this grip is the fact that you can cut to a line more easily, and easily gauge how much material you're removing. A variation of this grip is to rotate your left hand so your fingers are almost on top of the workpiece. Then, with your index finger and thumb holding the workpiece, place two or three fingers on the back of the blade. These fingers can be used to power the blade in a very controlled way. This variation is generally used for very refined and light cuts. The biggest risk with this variation is the fact that your left hand needs to be properly rotated so the base of your left thumb is out of the way of the blade.

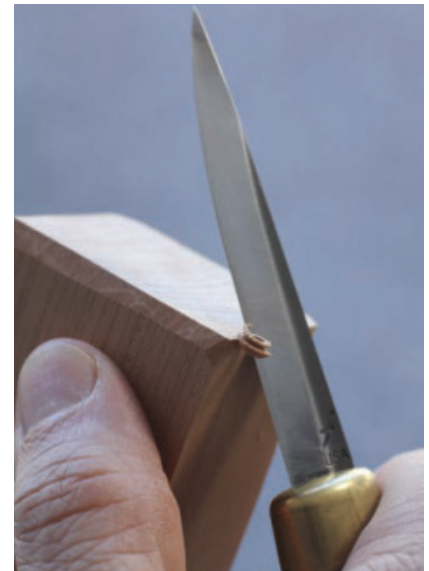
Thumb Skew Grip – Similar to how you would peel a potato, this grip involves holding the workpiece in mid-air with your left hand, planting your thumb on a surface that's perpendicular to the surface you want to cut, and using your thumb to generate power



Pull Grip, Modified – When more control is needed for finer cuts, this grip is a great option.

to remove the chip. As the name implies, skewing the knife makes the cut easier and more efficient. The most important aspect of this grip is to place your thumb entirely on the adjoining surface, with absolutely no overhang. Any amount of overhanging thumb will quickly and cleanly be removed with your knife. This grip is mainly for refining the wood near either end of the workpiece. Not only can you remove side grain wood (with your thumb placed on the end grain), but you can also pivot the workpiece, place your thumb on the side grain and chamfer the end grain of the workpiece. This technique is pictured in this article's lead photo on page 27.

Thumb Skew Grip – With your thumb out of the way of the knife when the blade exits the workpiece, this grip is very safe. It's used to work the material towards either end of a spoon.



shopnews

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Hook Knife Grip – This grip, and the movement associated with it, is different than the other grips. It's used to hollow out the bowl portion of a spoon by removing chips.

Hook Knife Grip – While all the other grips use a straight knife, this grip uses a hook knife, which is the most common tool for hollowing out the bowl of a spoon. The grip is somewhat similar to the thumb skew grip, especially when it comes to your thumb placement, how your thumb provides the opposing force for the cut, and keeping your thumb out of the cutting path of the knife. A hook knife is generally used across the grain. As you rotate the knife during use, the cutting edge will travel in a curved path, going deeper and deeper into the bowl as you work.



Hook Knife Grip, Modified – By placing the tip of your left thumb on or near the base of the blade, you can apply controlled pressure to the hook knife. This grip will assist with allowing you to cut downhill on some areas of the bowl.

A variation is to press your left thumb against the base of the blade or very end of the handle to power the blade while grasping the workpiece with your left hand. This offers a lot of control, and can assist with cutting downhill in certain areas of the spoon's bowl.



ROB BROWN

rbrown@canadianwoodworking.com



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INTRODUCTION TO

Workshop Safety

DIRECT

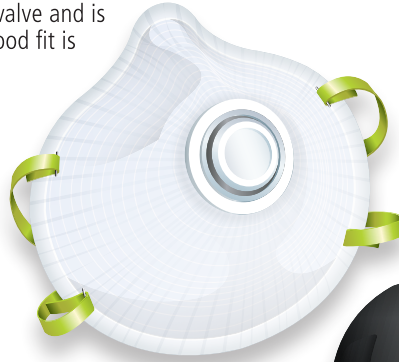
CARTRIDGE RESPIRATOR

These products will protect the user from both finishing vapors and wood dust. They're typically equipped with either one or two replaceable organic-vapor cartridges, and are usually bulkier and heavier than a dust mask / respirator.



DUST MASKS / RESPIRATOR

Great for keeping wood dust out of your lungs. Masks are generally very lightweight while respirators are slightly heavier. Respirators usually have replaceable filters and exhalation valves. A mask sometimes has an exhalation valve and is discarded. A good fit is essential.

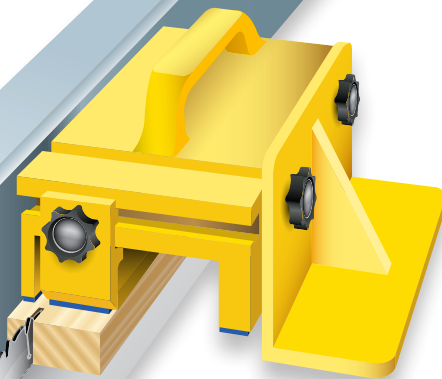


FACE SHIELDS

A standard face shield will cover the vast majority of the face, head and neck area, and offers decent protection from flying wood chips and some lighter airborne pieces of wood. The visor can easily be retracted after use. A dust mask or respirator can be used at the same time to protect the user from wood dust. A respirator face shield fits over the head and supplies clean air to the user, while also keeping wood dust and chips away from the users face. It will also protect the user from airborne pieces of wood.



INDIRECT



PUSH STICK / SYSTEM

Whether you purchase a few good push stick / systems or make your own, learn when to use them and follow through by actually reaching for them when appropriate. A good push stick / system will be comfortable and simple to use, and control the workpiece and potential offcut until the operation is complete.



FEATHERBOARDS

Simple and effective if used correctly. Featherboards apply pressure in one direction to hold the workpiece against a fence. They also protect against kickback, as their fingers are all angled, and will grip the workpiece if it moves in the opposite direction. Many options are available on the market. Custom featherboards can be made in the workshop.

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GLASSES

Proper safety glasses should be nearby at all times. If they are easy to put on, you're more likely to wear them. Safety glasses are now available in many styles: sunglasses; bifocal; full-lens magnifying; chemical; over glasses; and children's sizes.



HARDHAT

Not a common woodworking safety item, but it may come in handy for anyone working in their home in a tight space. Hitting your head on a low rafter or sharp object can cause a concussion.



EAR PROTECTION

Small ear plugs fit directly into the outer ear, and often expand slightly to form a good fit. You can purchase reusable and disposable versions. Hearing protectors are worn over the ears and are often available with radio and/or Bluetooth capabilities.



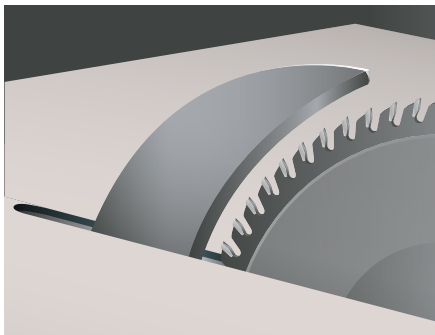
FOOTWEAR

Gone are the days of heavy and bulky protective footwear. Now, shoes and boots that protect feet from heavy loads and sharp objects can also look attractive. Choose a pair that are appropriate for the level of protection you need and that you like the look of so you are more likely to wear them while in the shop.



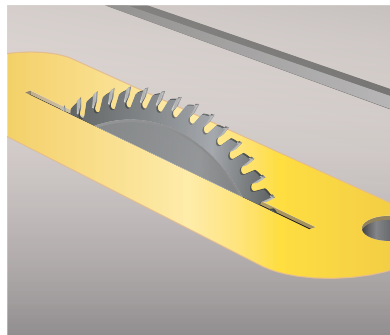
GLOVES

Gloves range in type depending on what level of protection you need. Thin vinyl gloves are usually disposable and offer protection from most finishes and adhesives. Nitrile and neoprene gloves provide a good barrier to most solvents. Anti-vibration, cut-resistant and splinter protection gloves are also available. It's generally dangerous to wear gloves near rotating blades and cutters.



RIVING KNIFE / SPLITTER

Both items are positioned directly behind your table saw's blade, eliminating the possibility of the workpiece pinching on the back side of your blade, causing it to become airborne. A riving knife moves up and down with your blade, as well as tilting on an angle, while a splitter remains stationary.



ZERO CLEARANCE THROAT PLATES

Used to minimize the gap between a table saw blade and the edge of a throat plate to prevent smaller offcuts or workpieces from getting trapped part way into the saw and potentially ejected, causing injury. These can be purchased or shop-made. Many woodworkers have multiples for different blade widths.

OVERARM TABLE SAW DUST COLLECTION GUARD

Performs double-duty by keeping the user's hands away from the blade, as well as removing dust from the cutting area. After-market products are available for many saws, while some woodworkers build their own systems.



Spoon and Utensil Making Basics

Photos by Rob Brown (Lead Photo by Jack Radford / Instagram: radjackfruit), Illustration by Len Churchill

Carving a spoon by hand, or even incorporating some power tools into the process, is a lot of fun. You'll also be surprised at how quickly a finished spoon can be made. Here are a few guidelines and tips to ensure success with your first spoon or utensil.

BY ROB BROWN

Most people are familiar with the general process needed to create a jewelry box, side table or other typical piece of woodwork. Straight lines are common, the workpieces are large enough to easily manipulate while machining and the tools and techniques are those they've used many times before.

This isn't the case when making a spoon or utensil, though. Different tools and techniques make up a healthy portion of creating one of these objects, as they are much smaller and curvier than pieces of furniture. This may throw people off at first, but once they've learned a few of the techniques associated with spoon and utensil making, they will be ready for action.

Utensil Anatomy

If you're going to start making spoons and utensils once in a while, it's not a bad idea to familiarize yourself with their parts. Once you start looking online for inspiration, you may find other folks talking about the bowl of a spoon or the spine of a knife. Understanding these terms will go a long way in helping you fine tune your hobby.

Sizing a utensil

Like woodworkers, spoons come in many different shapes and sizes. There isn't really a wrong size to make a spoon. All you have to do is rename the spoon and it automatically becomes the correct size. Thought you were aiming for something to stir your pasta, but ended up with a tiny 4" long spoon? No problem. You were just working on a tasting spoon, that's all. Now you know. You can easily get vague measurements from one of your metal spoons, but don't be afraid to push the envelope and go rogue.

You will find certain dimensions of a spoon or utensil should be fairly accurate and well thought out for it to work properly. For instance, the rim of a small tasting spoon will need to be on the thin side, as it will be easier to use. Conversely, a large stirring or serving spoon handle needs to be strong and have a thick neck so it doesn't break. This is the same with a fork or knife.

The material – wet vs. dry

There are pros and cons to using green (freshly cut) or dried wood for making utensils. The main pro to using greenwood is that it's easier to cut with a knife. When wood dries out it becomes harder, making it more difficult to cut through. People who work

with greenwood tend to use simple tools, like knives, to do a lot of the work. I think it's safe to say folks who are serious about carving spoons generally opt for greenwood. On the downside, greenwood isn't often easy to get hold of, especially if you live in a city.

If you select dry wood to carve a spoon from, it's likely going to be best to use tools most woodworkers are more familiar with. Hand tools will get a lot of use with dried wood, while machines like sanders and bandsaws are also used to remove waste quickly. This isn't to say you can't use a knife on dried wood, especially if it's nice and sharp. To each, their own.

A small downside of greenwood is the increased chance of the object developing cracks, or twisting more than you'd like, as it dries. One way to protect against this is to ensure it isn't left in an area that will cause it to dry out too quickly. Never place the item in front of a heat register, in direct sunlight or in a breezy area. It's a good idea to wrap it in some fabric between carving sessions (if you carve slowly), or once it's carved, in order to dry. The porous nature of the fabric will allow some moisture to escape, but not too quickly.

The material – species

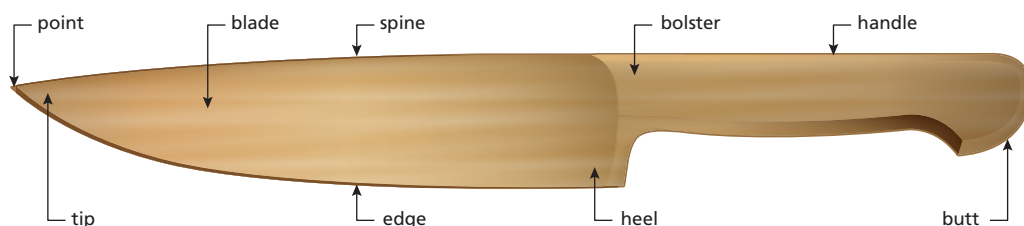
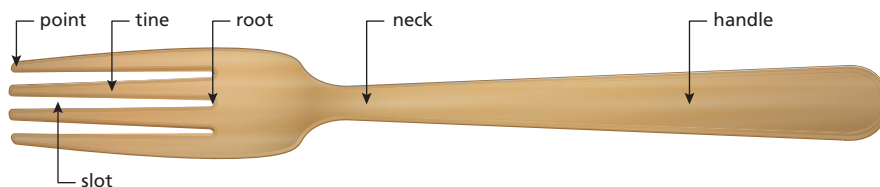
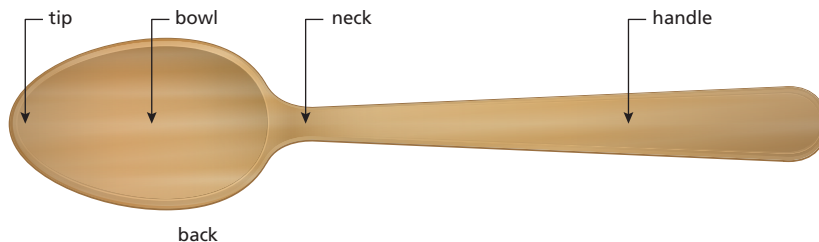
A piece of closed-grain hardwood is usually my preference for spoons that will actually get used. They're strong enough to resist breakage and are less likely to harbor bacteria in their pores. An even-grained wood also carves more evenly, as a blade edge isn't having to deal with softer and harder areas of wood as you work, which causes the blade to jump around a bit.

An advertisement for Arbortech power carving tools. The top features the 'ARBORTECH' logo in orange and black, with the tagline 'WORLD LEADER IN POWER CARVING' below it. The main heading 'POWER CARVING' is in large white letters, with 'RANGE' in a black box below it. The central image shows two large power carving tools, a hand-held router and a larger bench-mounted machine, along with several smaller accessories like sanders and burners. At the bottom, a row of six small images shows various wood carving projects in progress. The text 'A fun and safe way to creatively shape and sculpt timber. Designed to inspire. Engineered to last.' is printed below the main image.

www.arbortechtools.com



Grain Direction – When Brown wants a simple-looking spoon, he makes sure to draw the top view of the spoon onto a quarter-cut surface. This produces very straight grain in the bowl of the spoon. Orienting the grain at 90° to this will leave you with a circular pattern in the bowl, which is also attractive.



Arbortech Ball Gouge

Removing a lot of material, deep down into a large spoon or ladle, isn't an easy task with hand tools. One item that will quickly and easily create a deep bowl in a utensil is the Arbortech Ball Gouge. As the name implies, it will also create the hollow common in many wooden spoons. Once connected to an angle grinder the gouge can be used to protrude into the workpiece, shaping a concave area wherever needed. Even undercutting is possible, and can help create a ladle with a large volume. The Ball Gouge can also be used to create 3D shapes and texture on wood panels for furniture. **ArbortechTools.com**



Most maple is great. Black cherry and black walnut both have high style points, though they're a bit softer, but definitely not too soft to use, though. Birch and beech are both great options, as they are strong and have a closed grain. Poplar is nice for a beginner, as it's softer. I'm sure there are many other woods in your backyard that would make great spoons. Just consider the pros and cons of the wood before you select one for your spoon.

The material – grain

Grain should be considered when selecting a piece of wood for a spoon or utensil. I prefer a simple look for the grain in my spoons and tend to orient a spoon so the top view of the spoon is drawn onto quarter-cut grain. This results in a very simple grain pattern in the finished spoon. There's absolutely nothing wrong with orienting the grain 90° to this, as that will help produce a circular pattern in the bowl when the spoon is finished.

Including a mixture of sapwood and heartwood into a utensil is often a great approach. It adds some visual contrast, and reminds the user the material the utensil is made of came from what once was a living tree.

Figured wood grain can be wonderful, but if it's too heavy it can distract from a small, simple object like a spoon. Some grain features, like a knot, can even weaken a spoon or utensil. They're also harder to work with hand tools.

An easy first step

If this is your first spoon, or you're tackling a new or wild style of spoon, grab a piece of pine, spruce or basswood to practice with.

You don't even need to complete the spoon, but once you have the spoon roughed out in three dimensions you will have a much better idea regarding shape, style and any unique design characteristics.

Hollowing out the bowl

I think most woodworkers would have little problem cutting a spoon out and shaping the handle and exterior of the bowl. But when it came to hollowing out the bowl, they would likely scratch their heads a bit. Woodworkers rarely have to hollow anything out. Even turners, who use a completely different process, might take a moment to pause and consider options. The truth is, there are a number of options and which one is best for you is impossible for me to say.

If you're a traditionalist, you're likely leaning towards greenwood and a hook knife. Hook knives, also known as spoon knives, are commonly used to hollow out the bowl of a spoon, as they're curved to create a recess in the wood. If you're a carver, and have a wide selection of curved, sharp gouges, that's likely where you should start. A power tool junkie may cast their eye towards their router and any round-bottom bits they have. Even using a Forstner drill bit will help remove material quickly; then you can continue



How to Hollow – Removing the material to create the bowl is a slightly tricky part of making a spoon, and there are many ways to approach this. From traditional to modern, hand tools to power tools, there's an option for everyone.

Kutzall Burrs

If you enjoy using a rotary tool, you'll love using Kutzall burrs to remove material to form the bowl of a wooden spoon. With a wide range of shapes and sizes, there's something for everyone. A "ball nose" or "sphere" shaped burr is probably the best option for spoon making, though they will come in handy in other shop situations. Kutzall's "Extreme" series is great for rough stock removal, while their "Original" series is an excellent choice for smoothing rough surfaces. Kutzall.com



shaping the bowl with other methods. If you're making a spoon with a really deep bowl, you can bore holes to a certain depth using a small drill bit, then use other tools (a carving gouge, for instance) to remove the material down to the bottoms of the holes. Another technique that's becoming more popular these days is power carving. Companies like Arbortech and Kutzall have power carving attachments to help you hollow a spoon's bowl.

Using a template

A template is a great way to make multiple utensils look similar. It's also a good way to keep a utensil symmetrical. Having said that, if you're only making a few items, or if they aren't going to be symmetrical anyways, I wouldn't worry about a template.

Making a template out of a thin sheetgood, such as 1/8" or 1/4" plywood or Masonite, is a good approach, though printing paper templates can also work nicely. Pasting the paper directly onto the faces of the wood blank with a spray adhesive allows you to cut along the printed line. You can also go back in a year and re-create many more utensils to match the initial batch you made.

Finishes

The vast majority of finishes become food-safe once they've fully cured, though people do tend to select a finish that's more on the natural side when finishing items that will go in their mouth or touch their food. Surprisingly, when I'm selecting a finish it's more about how the finish affects the look of the wood, and how well it will stand up to whatever is thrown at it over its lifetime, that influences my decision. I certainly don't want to consume unhealthy finishes, but unless I'm going to use a spoon to mix a

lot of hot ingredients (like a spoon for mixing a stir fry or chili, for example), or I will be regularly using it to eat from directly (that's never been the case for me), the question of health is actually a bit lower on my list.

Generally speaking, most folks use a penetrating finish over a film-forming finish on functional utensils. A film finish looks great at first, but will develop cracks and eventually chip off. A penetrating finish will soak into the wood, and help protect the spoon from the inside, as well as help the outside of the spoon look nice.

Although oils that don't dry (walnut, vegetable, mineral, etc.) are often used to finish a wooden spoon or utensil, I prefer not to go this route. Because some oils don't dry, they may always feel a bit wet, and they could also impart a taste in the food you're preparing with the utensil. Some of them can also go rancid and start to smell after a while.

Using a natural oil like tung or linseed is a common approach to finishing a utensil. I've also used OSMO products, as well as a few products from the "Tried & True" line of finishes from Lee Valley. When a spoon I make is for dry ingredients I sometimes use shellac to apply a few very light coats, often on top of an oil. The shellac adds a very thin film and a nice sheen to the wood, while also protecting the wood. Shellac is also food-safe.

I've heard of many serious utensil makers soaking their freshly carved spoons in a house mixture of oils. The reason for this is the finish will soak well into the wood, and when it dries will provide a high level of protection. I've never felt the need to go this far.

There are also many spoon carvers out there who don't apply any finish to their spoons. The wood will discolour, and may even develop small checks easier, but it's a natural process some spoon makers prefer.

Whatever finish you use on your next utensil, give it ample time to fully dry before using it. It will stand up to wear and tear much better, and will provide longer service to you.

Care

Don't let a wooden spoon or utensil sit in water. It's completely fine to get them wet, but allowing them to sit in water will cause more small cracks to develop. The finish also deteriorates and the wood turns a greyish colour. Hand washing a wooden utensil with mild soap and warm water, then drying it off, is the best long-term approach to keeping your utensil looking new.

After a while, you will likely want to add another coat or two of finish to rejuvenate its appearance, but that's up to you. You may also like the patina it develops, and want to leave it alone.

Rob usually considers just about every wood under the sun to make his next spoon, but for some reason usually settles on black cherry. He also considers not texturing the spoon, right before he adds some texture.



ROB BROWN

rbrown@canadianwoodworking.com

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walks and floors, flagstone or interlocking stone from the elements, and from salt and chemical damage. It also protects log cabins and wood panelling. You can use it as an oil finish for most wood types because it creates a coating that is impervious to water, heat, most stains and scratches. Staining with this product achieves a warm golden tone to pine and maple. Porous woods and walnut will darken considerably when treated.

SolvableWorks.com

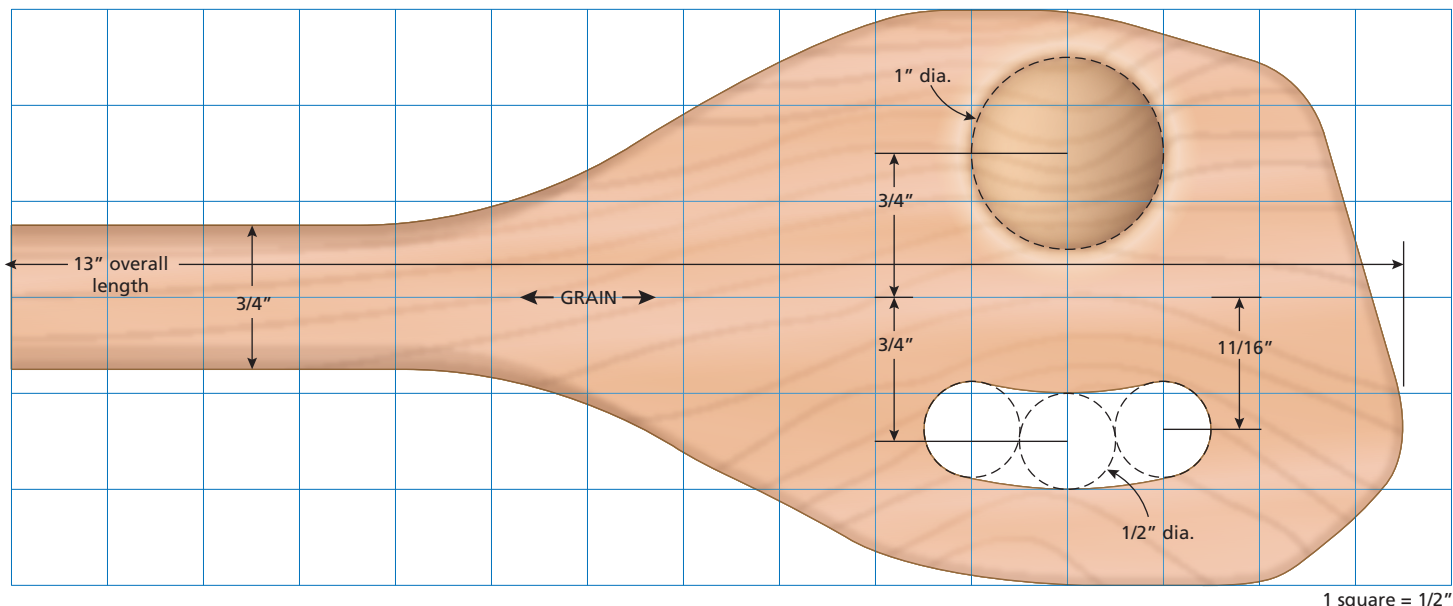
Make a LÖFFTEL

A Löfftel is a spatula / spoon hybrid that's sort of the multi-tool of cooking. Make one today and you'll forever wonder what you did without it.

BY WILFRIED ELZNER

For the wood artisan, making an object that can be used on a daily basis is very satisfying. Not only will you use your Löfftel regularly, but it's simple enough to craft that you can make a few at once to give as gifts. This really is the gift that keeps on giving. On top of that, a Löfftel is a one-of-a-kind, functional utensil that will surely spark a conversation when dinner guests come over.

Coming from the spatula family, the **löfftel** is a name created from the German words spoon (**löffel**) and spatula (**spachtel**). It's essentially a handle and a slotted flat blade with a small bowl imbedded on one side. The three radiuses in the blade accommodate a variety of pots and bowls, while the blade allows for scraping, mixing, stirring and adding aeration. The spoon-like pocket is designed for taste testing. They can also be made in right- or left-hand versions, depending on the preference of the user. The difference is in the layout of the business end; the spoon-like pocket should be near the user side of the utensil when brought to one's mouth. Be sure to make extras, as your spouse, family and friends will all be requesting one.



Tools and materials

Everyone has a slightly different approach to making an item like this, but I start with dry hardwood, an axe, hand saw or band saw, 1" diameter core box router bit, 1-1/4" sanding pad on a spigot (DIY - as shown below, the pad is glued on with Crazy Glue), carving knife, 1/2" diameter Forstner bit, belt sander, dry and wet sandpaper (100 to 500 grit), hot water, and finishing oil.

This project starts with your selection of material. Choose a straight-grained dry hardwood - cherry, maple, apple, hickory and ironwood are some of my favourites. You can use a shop offcut or a piece of firewood. Square up your chosen piece of wood to approximately 3/4" thick x 3-1/2" wide x 13" long. If you'd like to make more than one Löffel, I recommend making a template to use to transfer the shape to your piece of wood. Once marked out, proceed with cutting out the profile with a saw.



Split Your Blank – While you can always use shop offcuts or pieces from a board that has been kiln dried, it's also fine to cut your workpiece from a piece of firewood. Domestic wood is generally great for making utensils.



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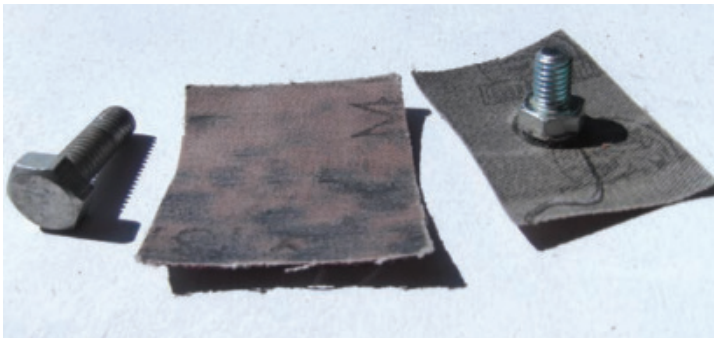
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Trim to Size – After ensuring one face is flat, draw the profile onto the blank and remove most of the waste with a band saw. Notice the four small black dots on the far end of this blank locating the pocket and slot.



Sanding the Pocket – Elzner adheres some thick abrasive paper to the head of a large bolt (above), then chucks the bolt in his drill press (right) to help smooth the pocket. A sharp carving gouge, or some hand sanding, will also help with this step.

Make the pocket

Now is decision time for whether it will be right- or left-handed. Make the pocket using a drill or router with a 1" diameter core box bit. I aim for this hollow to be 5/16" deep. To finish the inside of the pocket and add a radius, I use coarse sandpaper adhered to the head of a fairly large bolt. There's nothing wrong with hand sanding, but that approach will take longer. A rotary tool, with carefully chosen sanding attachment, might also ease the process.

Slot time

Drill three 1/2" diameter holes with a Forstner bit to remove most of the material to create the slot. Although it can be straight, creating a curved slot is attractive. Round and fair the slot with a coping saw, wood rasp or file, and carving knife. Aim for a visually appealing slot that's evenly curved, with all its sharp edges eased nicely.

Give it some shape

I use a belt sander with a 60-grit belt, but an edge or disc sander would also work well. Beginning 1/4" below the pocket, start a taper that's approximate 8° towards the edges. You will mirror that taper on the opposite side to achieve a 1/8" edge for the bottom and front of the Löffel, with a small radius on the top. Continue from the pocket and sand a taper that blends into the handle. Change the belt to 220 grit and round all the corners and smooth all the



Machine the Pocket – A core box router bit can be used to create the pocket. Although a router bit is usually used in a router, using a drill press running at a fairly high speed might even be easier for this specific situation, as the bit isn't going to move side-to-side at all during the cut.



Drill the Slot – Use a Forstner bit and drill press to remove most of the material for the slot.



Smooth it With Hand Tools – With the slot roughly formed, use an assortment of hand tools to shape it. Rasps, knives, chisels and files will all come in handy. Don't feel the need to get it perfect at this stage, as it will be easier to complete the slot once the blade of the Löffel is thinner.

surfaces you can. Now you can clamp the utensil to a fixed surface to hand sand and blend all the curves.

The next step will be to place the utensil into hot water for wet sanding. This will raise the wood fibres. When dry, use a fine grit to sand the surface of the utensil smooth. You can repeat this a few times to get even more of the grain raised, though there are diminishing returns. Lastly, apply a food-safe oil to the wood. This is a great way to enhance the grain and colour of the wood, and also add some protection from stains down the road. Now it's time to head into the kitchen to test your new creation.

Wilfried is a machinist/mechanical designer by trade. He was eventually drawn to woodworking, and now creates unique handcrafted utensils and kitchenware. He has always felt most comfortable covered in sawdust, much to his wife's concerns.



WILFRIED ELZNER
elzneroriginals@gmail.com



Balancing Act – Continue to bring the blade down to final thickness and shape, striking a balance between looks, strength and function. Using a pencil or marker to mark where the blade needs to be thinned is a great approach.



Refining the Slot – Now that the blade is much thinner, the slot can be refined further. It's a lot weaker now, and with all the work you've put into it, you want to ensure you don't break it.



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Carving a SIMPLE SPOON

Using this straightforward approach and a few basic hand and power tools will leave you with a great-looking wooden spoon.

BY KIM DAGORNE

Spoons are a necessity. We use them every day and often have our favourites, maybe because of the way the spoon feels in our hand, the way it looks or it's simply perfect for the task at hand.

I'm going to show you how to make your own spoon using a minimal amount of equipment. I'll also recommend some additional tools you'll find helpful if you want to take your spoon-crafting hobby to the next level. Carving is a very portable skill, but using any sort of vise can make it easier.

Tools

Start with a few basics, such as a straight knife and a shallow gouge for the bulk removal of material. A mallet or a small hand saw is a fast way to remove a lot of unwanted material, too. Using a band saw will get the job done even faster. I use vises to hold the wood whenever possible, as it's less tiring and much safer. I wear cut-resistant gloves to

Photos by Steve Der-Garabedian



Basic Tools – A medium-sized selection of tools, most of which woodworkers already have, is all that’s needed for this spoon design.

keep my hands safe in case of an accidental slip of my tools. You’ll also need sandpaper for cleaning up towards the end. Flex tape, files, scrapers and rasps are handy additions, but not essential.

I can’t stress enough the importance of sharp, well-maintained tools. Invest in some form of sharpening equipment, such as water stones, power grinder or belt sander. You can even use honing

compound on the fly for the best results. Not only are dull tools frustrating to use, but they also have a greater tendency to slip off the work and into the user.

Start with the shape

I tend to use dried wood for my spoons, and that’s the process I’m going to take you through here. Once you’ve selected the wood, draw out the silhouette of your spoon on the lumber itself. Cut out



Sketch it Out – With your spoon blank cut roughly to size, draw the top view of the spoon onto it. The side view can also be drawn on, even though it will get cut off shortly. It’s sometimes easier to align the top and front view while the blank is in one piece, and the offcut with the side view on it can be used to help lay out those cuts down the road.



Shape with a Band Saw – A band saw will make quick work of most of the waste, quickly roughing out the spoon.



Side View – You can either use the offcut as a guide to mark the side view or freehand sketch the side view onto the spoon blank.

the shape of your spoon using hand tools, such as a saw or a mallet and chisel. I prefer to use a band saw to remove much of the waste and get to the carving part faster.

You can draw the side view on the outside of the blank to determine the bowl depth. You'll end up cutting it off, but we can address that when we get to the handle step. If your wood is too thick for the spoon you plan, cut the depth uniformly along the length of the wood, slightly exceeding the depth of the bowl. This method frees up the exact handle placement decision until later in the process, and also allows for better clamping or holding in a vise.

I usually draw the side view of the spoon onto the side of the blank now, as the side view sometimes affects how deep I want to carve the bowl. Every spoon is a bit different, though.

Carving out the bowl

I try to use a vise for this step because it is the most difficult and, in my opinion, the most likely place for a gouge to slip into whatever is holding it. If you don't have a vise, hold the blank down using a clamp as it should still be uniform and roughly square in shape. This allows you to keep your hands far from the blade's trajectory as you dig out the bowl to the depth you want.

I start at the inside edges of the outline I drew earlier, using a shallow gouge and mallet to define the outline. I then work away from the top and the bottom using shallow cuts and rotating often until I feel it's deep enough and has a pleasing basic bowl shape.



Helping Hand – A vise that holds the roughed-out spoon blank is going to be great to have, though with a little bit of experimentation, a standard vise will also be helpful.



Elbow Grease – A series of hand saw cuts to the proper depth will allow you to use a knife or chisel to remove a lot of the waste. Using a band saw to cut blanks that don't have a flat bottom face can be dangerous.

Don't worry if it still looks a little messy or slightly uneven at this stage; we will return to clean it up further.

Getting a handle

I work on the handle next, using a straight knife. This spoon will have a gentle curve, but it can be anywhere from straight to something more dramatic. Some people will even incorporate spirals or

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Safety First – Though there are exceptions, cutting away from yourself is generally the safest approach. You can position yourself at either ends of the spoon while you make the cuts to further shape your spoon.

twists as they become more comfortable with their tools. Again, you can use a saw or knife to remove most of the unwanted material. Be careful not to remove too much material if you're using a saw as you will still need to round the handle. The handle of spoon can emerge from the bottom, middle or even the top of the bowl, and that's part of what you will be deciding now.

Remember, you can't add material back on, so take your time as you work the handle. Stop and hold the spoon as if you're about to use it. Look at it to ensure the scale is pleasing as you remove



Back of the Bowl – Rather than taking a few larger cuts, make a lot of small cuts when you're using a knife to shape a spoon.

material. I leave extra wood where the handle meets the bowl for added strength, especially on bigger spoons. We will also further clean where the handle joins the bowl once the back of the bowl has been addressed.

Time for the back side

Next, remove the back side of the bowl. The shape of the bowl on the inside will now be reflected on the outside. For safety and convenience, you can use a vise or clamp to gently hold the handle of the spoon to carve the back of the bowl. If you do not have

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access to one of these, always hold the handle with one hand and keep it behind the blade of the knife. Use your other hand to carve the unwanted wood away.

To determine the direction of the grain, make short shallow cuts as you begin. One direction will be much easier to cut than the other. By cutting in this easier direction, which is with the grain, you'll avoid tear-out. The wood direction generally changes at about the halfway point of the bowl. If you try to rush or remove too much in one cut, you may find that your spoon has a hole all the way through it. Avoid accidentally tearing out oversized chunks of wood. Remove material starting at the tip and work back towards where the bowl meets the handle, changing the direction of your cuts as needed. Keep removing material until you're satisfied with the overall shape and depth.

Keep in mind you will be removing more material with final sanding to smooth out the surfaces at the end, so keep it slightly thicker than you want. I stop regularly during this step to feel the thickness by pinching all around the bowl portion between my fingers. You can also use a caliper if you'd like more precise measurements. Stop when it feels uniform in thickness and is almost where you want it to end up.

Final touches

One of the last steps is to carefully and gently remove the rest of the wood where the handle meets the bowl, called the neck. This is where I decide if I want a gentle sloping connection or a defined crisp look with a strong lip on the spoon. This is an aesthetic choice for me.



Shape the Neck – The neck of a spoon is the transition between the handle and the bowl. There are lots of options for what design approach you take, ranging from tapering to meeting at a right angle. The choice is largely about aesthetics, but a tapering neck is stronger, as it has more material around that area of the spoon.



Sand it Smooth – Though there's nothing wrong with leaving small, flat facets made by the hand tools you used to carve a surface, there's also nothing wrong with removing all of those facets with sandpaper.

The spoon now has its basic shape but is likely still very textured. The next step can be accomplished using just sandpaper or you can use fine rasps, files or scrapers to get the look and feel you desire. You can use a rasp or file on both the handle and the back and use a scraper to clean up the bowl. I use sandpaper for the final touch-ups, starting with 120x, then 180x, and finally 220x on the parts I want smooth. The inside of the bowl is usually the biggest challenge to clean up.

Applying a finish

Once I have the spoon completed to this point, I wipe it with a damp, clean cloth to raise the grain one last time. I hit this with 220x sandpaper to smooth it once more.

Wipe your spoon down thoroughly with a clean, dry, soft lint-free rag, and then it's time to apply a finish. Use a food-safe finish

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A Flat Rim – Laying a piece of sandpaper on a flat surface and sanding the rim of the bowl will leave you with an even, flat rim.



Protect It – While protecting your spoon from liquids and foods it comes in contact with, a finish also adds colour and enhances the grain of your spoon. Many food-safe options are available.

only. I use polymerized linseed oil designed as a food-safe finish, as it creates a liquid-resistant barrier and gives a warm luster to the spoon itself. I apply four coats, following the manufacturer's directions, and give it 24 to 48 hours to cure between coats. Follow the instructions and warnings for the finish you choose. Never use cooking oil as a finish; it's not meant for this use and has an expiry date, unlike the wooden spoon you just worked so hard to create.

Now there's nothing left to do but enjoy your new spoon.

Kim has been woodworking for years, with constant creating the priority. Spoon carving allows her to scatter wood chips through the workshop, back deck, campgrounds and even in her car every single day.



KIM DAGORNE
kjdagorne@gmail.com

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How to Teach a Young Woodworker To Carve Spoons

Kids are often interested in how things are made. And making an item that gets used on a regular basis will also give them a lot of pride and satisfaction.



Copy Cat – There's nothing wrong with finding a spoon you want to mimic, then tweaking the design to your liking. Brown and his son, Jonas, started with a metal spoon, then increased the width of the neck to make it stronger, and added an asymmetric handle.

BY ROB BROWN

I think the key to having a good experience while making a wooden spoon with your child is to realize they very likely can't do everything themselves, and they will get frustrated if you expect them to. If they don't want to use a bandsaw to remove most of the waste, then do it yourself and show them how it's done. If they find hogging off a lot of material isn't easy or fun, maybe show them how you do it, but still include them in the process so they feel involved. Having a good first experience will mean they will likely be back for more one day.

Before we set to work to make this spoon, I let my eight-year-old son, Jonas, use a sloyd knife to whittle a 3/4" x 3/4" x 12" long cedar stick. I showed him three grips: the elbow grip; the thumb push grip; and the pull grip. I also showed him the variation of the pull grip so he could use a few of the fingers of his left hand to carefully guide the blade and remove small amounts of wood while working towards his body. This allowed him to become a bit more comfortable with using the knife, and how it feels to remove a nice shaving of wood.



Another Trim – Add a few lines to the side view of the blank and remove the waste with a saw. Just make sure the spoon sits on the table of the saw without rocking, as it could be dangerous if the blank caught during a cut. You can even use the initial off-cut to support the blank during this cut.

Design

We decided to make a serving spoon. I felt anything smaller might be too hard to hold, while something larger might be too much work, causing boredom and frustration. I was really just aiming for success. We used a metal serving spoon as a rough template, then beefed up the neck and added a slight curve to the handle. A straight handle would have been easier, but the boy wanted some curves in his spoon, and I didn't want to disagree with his sense of style. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree.

Our approach

We chose a piece of straight-grained maple from the firewood pile. Greenwood is slightly easier to work with than kiln-dried wood, but if kiln-dried is all you have, go for it.

Machinery offers lots of benefits, but I mostly wanted my son to get familiar with the simple task of using a knife to carve a wooden spoon. Don't get me wrong: I did use electricity to quickly dress the workpiece to rough thickness, and remove the vast majority of the waste. After the outline was marked on the blank, my son and I shared the task of removing much of the waste with a scroll saw. A scroll saw is a bit slow for cutting 1" thick maple, but it's quite safe and quiet. Cutting close to the line removed as much waste as possible, and left less material for the knife to remove.

I also secretly removed some of the excess material on the edges of the underside of the bowl, so he wouldn't have as much wood to deal with. After all, I was aiming to keep Jonas from getting frustrated with a drawn-out process.

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A Helping Hand – Brown removed a bunch of material on the underside of the bowl so when his son reached this part of the project he wouldn't have as much material to deal with. This speeds up the process, and might be the difference between success and failure in some cases. Every kid's skill level is different, and that should be taken into account.

Hollowing the bowl

Many spoon carvers hollow the bowl late in the game, but I thought it would be easiest to do this towards the start, because we could clamp the workpiece down while we hollowed.

When it comes to hollowing out the bowl of a spoon there are many options, but I was focused on whatever method would be easiest for an eight-year old. Everyone's different, but I felt a razor-sharp carving gouge would be the easiest



Hollow the Bowl – Though there are many options for this task, Brown opted to use a sharp gouge to remove small chips to create the bowl of the spoon.

and safest approach. We clamped the spoon blank to a solid chair, as the workbench was a bit too high. I also made sure to keep the chair steady as my son carved, as the last thing he needed was to carve a moving spoon.

We took turns—dad first—removing small chips of wood to form the bowl. By the time we were done, Jonas had a fairly good idea how to hold the gouge, how much pressure to use and how to take a light shaving from the workpiece. I still watched him like a hawk, as sharp gouges can slice through skin very easily. We just cut from the outside rim inwards, towards the bottom of the bowl, and repositioned our bodies around the spoon when



Elbow Grip – Probably the most natural for new carvers, the elbow grip can be used to remove many of the sharp edges. Watch a child for their technique, and don't be afraid to encouragingly show them proper technique. The tendency might be for a child to remove too much material with each cut, so remind them of that, too.



Pull Grip – Working towards the body can be scary at first, but if someone is following good technique, this grip will make many carving situations easier. Remind the user to keep the tip of the blade pointed away from their body at all times, and show them that the heel of the hand or thumb should hit their body first if a cut gets away from them.

needed. As we approached the finished bowl, I stressed how important it was to take only light shavings. It worked well, and we ended up with a nicely shaped spoon bowl that would be fine-tuned later. A quick glance at the smile on his face proved we were both proud.

Reach for the knife

Jonas had already practiced grasping a knife and whittling a piece of scrap wood, so he was eager to put his skills to use on something practical. After a quick review of the elbow grip, he was off.

We focused on easing a lot of the right angles on the four corners of the handle. He was soon successfully cutting “downhill” and, with less success, cutting “uphill.” With a short lesson on why it’s better to cut downhill, he was starting to learn some real carving techniques. Soon, he was rotating the spoon and switching it end-for-end when needed in order to obey our “downhill” rule, and starting to naturally switch between grips, though a few times I had to stop him from doing something outside-the-box with the sharp knife.

With the square cross section now eased to more of an octagon, we turned our attention to the neck and the underside of the bowl. This area is harder, as the turns are tighter. Switching between the bowl, neck and handle areas, we worked our way around the spoon a few times. Every so often I would ask him to pause, put the knife down, and not only grasp the spoon like he was using it, but to also look at it for any lumps or bumps that needed to be removed, before picking up the knife again. Having a narrower detail knife, as well as a standard knife, made dealing with the tighter curves a bit easier, but if you have only one knife, don’t let that stop you from taking on this fun project.

My role

Jonas was now doing virtually all the work, but I felt the need to keep a close eye on his technique. His tendency was to remove too much wood with each slice. We talked about how that’s not only more dangerous, but will also leave a rougher surface. He also started to realize how much harder it was on his muscles to remove larger shavings.



Uphill, Downhill – Teaching a new woodworker about the difference between uphill and downhill cutting isn’t easy. Brown drew a line parallel with the grain, then positioned it level with the ground. At this point it’s easier to visualize uphill and downhill cutting by looking at the edge of the wood above that line.



Thumb Push Grip – The thumb push grip offers a lot of control, but it might be difficult for someone with small hands. Switching to a knife with a narrower blade can make cutting tight curves easier.

The “uphill” versus “downhill” situation was starting to come fairly natural to Jonas, and the odd bit of tearout quickly reminded him of these guidelines, so I didn’t have to.

While tearout is a great reminder of grain direction, and a cut on your hand is a great way to learn how sharp a carefully honed knife really is, I didn’t want him to learn the hard way. I kept reminding him about placing the spoon blank on his leg carefully when using the elbow grip, and keeping the base of his left thumb rotated out of the way while using both the standard and modified pull grip.

More finesse required

I found the initial hour or so was fairly easy, as the cuts didn’t need to be too accurate. Once the spoon was starting to look more like a real spoon, the knife cuts needed to be more precise. The same grips were still being employed, but some finesse was needed when it came to using the grips to remove wood as desired. Rotating the spoon slightly, as opposed to moving the knife to a different spot on the spoon, was something we focused on. Using the thumb push grip allowed for a lot of control at this stage.

It became extra tricky as we worked around the bottom of the bowl, as well as the neck area of the spoon. To demonstrate the small details of carving, I would stand behind Jonas (as he sat in



Apply a Finish – Once the greenwood spoon was allowed to dry out, tung oil was applied to its surface. This helps protect the spoon from stains and keeps it looking newer for longer.

the chair) and bring an arm around either side of him. This allowed me to show him the same view he would see while he carved. I slowly and clearly showed him how I would hold the spoon and the knife, and what motion I would use to remove the shaving.

It was sometimes hard, as his hands are a lot smaller and weaker than mine, but when one approach didn't work, we tried a slightly different approach until something worked.

When to stop?

We could have probably spent another few hours refining the shape and feel of the spoon, but I didn't think that's what an eight-year-old would want to do. When attention spans are short, I think

it's best not to drag things out too much. His spoon felt good in the hand, and would surely excel at serving a wide range of foods. Celebrating an accomplishment and giving a lot of pats on the back was a great way to ensure this first wooden spoon project my son and I did together won't be our last.

Finishing touches

Because the wood was green, we let it dry for over a week after carving it, then applied two coats of tung oil to the surfaces, paying extra attention to the end grain. When the oil had cured, it was time to celebrate. I said we should order a pizza with whatever he wanted on it, but he looked at me and said, "But then I can't use my spoon."

"Good point," I replied. And for the first time in his life, he chose green peas and maple brown beans over pizza. What's our next project, you ask? A pizza cutter, obviously.



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rbrown@canadianwoodworking.com



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Kolrosing a Wooden Spoon with a Classic Basket Weave

Kolrosing is a wood decorating technique from the Viking age of Scandinavia, and very likely earlier. It involves using the tip of a knife to separate wood fibres, scoring a design onto the wood's surface and then rubbing a pigment into the cuts to highlight the design.

BY CARLOS ERIC

I make spoons using greenwood and hand tools. Although I will be showing you how to kolrose one with a basket weave design, pretty much any shape or pattern can be made with this technique.

In order to kolrose, you only need some basic tools and supplies, all of which you probably already have in your shop or home. Traditionally, coal dust or tree bark dust was used to highlight the cuts in the wood. Today, it's more common to use finely crushed coffee or cinnamon powder.

Tools and equipment

To get started with kolrosing, I recommend using the following tools and equipment:

- Kolrosing knife: There are dedicated blades for this, but you can use any fine-tipped wood carving knife. Heavily tape the bulk of the blade so you can hold it like a pen.
- Burnisher: I use a smooth stone, but you can also use a smooth piece of dense wood, deer antler, a marble, etc.
- Fine-tipped pencil: Mechanical pencils work well.
- Pliable ruler: This helps to keep lines straight when drawing your designs, if that's the design you've chosen.



Even With the Edge – Drawing lines parallel with an edge can be easy. Hold the pencil normally, and press your fourth fingertip against the edge of the workpiece. Run your ring finger down the edge of the spoon while marking the line.



Keep Things Even – A ruler will go a long way toward drawing straight lines, and keep those lines evenly spaced. Here, Eric marks the length of the spoon handle so the angled lines will be marked evenly.



First Set of Lines – Working with all the marks left in the previous step, add angled pencil lines to the handle. These lines should be about 45° to the center line of the spoon.

- **Eraser:** This is used to fix any design flaws and to erase pencil marks after you have finished kolrosing.
- **Hand towel:** Placing the spoon on a towel while kolrosing it keeps it clean and free of scuffs while applying your designs.
- **Kolrosing pigment:** I recommend crushed coffee or cinnamon powder, as these are common kitchen items and food-safe. Cinnamon has a red tint, which can be attractive, but if you want a crisp dark design, it's best to use coffee. Use a coffee grinder, blender or a mortar and pestle to crush your coffee beans as finely as possible.
- **Oil:** This is used to seal the spoon and to help the pigment get into the kolrosing designs. There are many to choose from, and it depends on availability and preference. If you want something that polymerizes, I recommend a food-safe linseed or tung oil.
- **Paper towel:** To wipe the excess oil off your spoon. Be sure to safely dispose of any oiled paper towels as these can be highly flammable.

Wood recommendations

Most kinds of wood can be kolrosed, but some are more ideal than others. Generally speaking, if a wood is light in colour and not extremely porous, it will work. If it's too dark, the design won't be as visible. If it's too porous, the pigment will stain the spoon all over.

Our great country has a wide selection of woods to choose from, and I'm sure they all have their pros and cons when it comes to spoon making, as well as kolrosing. I'm familiar with the tree species in eastern Canada, and this is what I use:

- Sugar maple
- White birch
- Manitoba maple
- Cherry
- Poplar
- Apple
- Walnut

Burnish and clean

Burnish the entire surface of your finished spoon. This makes

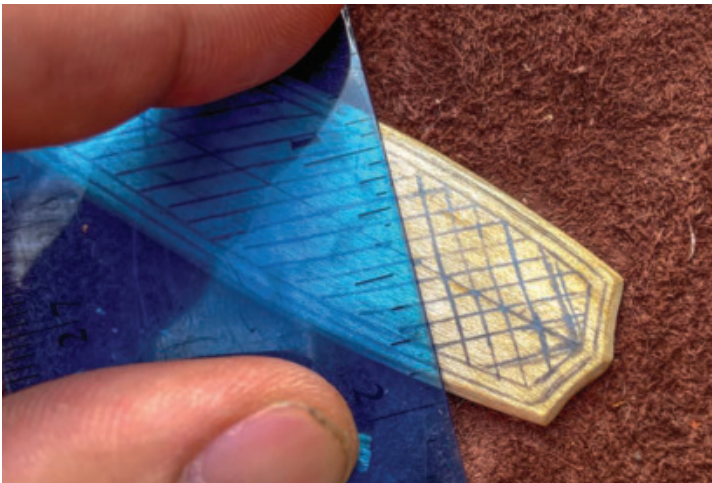
the surface smooth and easier to work on, allowing you to erase the pencil marks more easily when you are done. Make sure your working area and hands are clean so you don't dirty your spoon.

Kolrosing design considerations

The designs you make can be as simple or as complex as you want. Sometimes it's good to just draw without planning in order to practice your knife strokes and see how far your skills will take you. You will eventually figure out how close you're able to locate cuts, how tight you can cut an arc and the differences between the different woods. This all comes with time, and is the main reason why you should practice on some scrap wood before kolrosing your next completed project.

Abstract or geometric designs are a great way to begin, as they can be as simple as a few lines with a few dots. Even this will add a lovely extra quality to your handmade item.

For the purpose of the rest of this article, I'm going to show you how to create a classic basket weave pattern on the upper face of a spoon handle.



Bonus Points for Precision – When you're creating a geometric pattern, do your best to keep the lines parallel. Precision at this stage will translate into a stronger visual down the road.

Basket weave design

You can trace your spoon shape on a piece of paper to try out some different designs first, or you can take a look at the shape of your spoon and make your decision based upon that. Be sure to draw your design lightly so it's easier to erase later on.

To draw borders around your spoon handle, hold your pencil firmly in your hand and use your fingers as an edge guide to keep an equal distance around the border.

Once you have your border drawn, draw the center line to help keep your basket weave symmetrical. Mark the center by eye on top and bottom within your border to be a guide for your ruler. You can also place marks along the center line to keep your crisscross marks even.

Next, use the ruler to draw the first two lines at the top. Using these first lines as guides, keep your next lines as parallel to these as possible as you go. Once you have your lines drawn down one side, do the same for the other. Make sure the lines cross exactly where the center line meets so that your boxes stay symmetrical.

With all of your boxes drawn, begin to map out the actual weave. The way I do this is to mark out the boxes which act as the spacers in between the actual weave.

Draw guidelines through the boxes in between to show the direction of the weave. These will be three boxes long, and will meet each other to form "T"s. Do your best to keep it ordered properly or mistakes might be easily visible. .

Some notes on technique

Try to hold your kolrosing knife at a 90° angle to the wood, straight up and down, as much as possible when making your cuts. This will allow you to glide through the wood more easily, as well as make turns in the wood.

With your non-dominant hand, hold the wood steady on your folded hand towel with your index or middle finger above where you want to begin cutting your designs. With your dominant hand, hold the knife at a 90° angle and begin cutting your designs in the wood. Use both hands to follow the pencil marks and make your cuts little by little.

Try not to press too hard, and avoid double cuts within the same lines. One cut through the wood grain is all you typically



Add Details – In order to keep all of the squares organized and end up with the proper pattern, Eric adds dots to certain squares. In this case, the dotted squares indicate the negative space between the basket weave pattern. It's critical that the pattern be correct at this stage, as an even, repeating pattern like this basket weave could be potentially ruined by one mistake.

need. Making multiple cuts within the same line increases the chance of slipping out and making the design look messy. If you do need to make a double cut within the same line to widen it, just be as careful as possible. Having a kolrosing knife is an advantage as they are designed with a fine tip and a fat body, making it easier to separate the wooden fibres wider apart, reducing the need for any double cuts.

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Even More Details – With all the dots complete, Eric then adds lines in both directions to further clarify the pattern. The lines indicate where the basket weave pattern will be, and what parts of the pattern will overlap other parts.



Similar to a Pencil – Eric holds the knife at a 90° angle to the surface of the workpiece, and grasps the knife similar to a pencil.

If you do slip outside of your design, try not to worry about it too much. Design slips are very common, especially when you're starting out. It will usually only be you who notices these minor mistakes. You will naturally make fewer mistakes the more you practice. The human hand isn't perfect, and some imperfection will tell the user it was done by hand. Computers or machines are far more accurate, but something made

by hand has those human imperfections which make it all the more special.

It's also best to work in sunlight or under a bright lamp for maximum visibility. Being able to clearly view your work, and the cuts you're making, is critical.

Making the kolrosing cuts

It's time to begin your actual knife work. Keep in mind, since you're using pencil and holding the spoon tight, there



Make Cuts in One Direction – With the double line of perimeter cuts made, Eric turns his attention to making the many cuts that make up the basket weave pattern. He makes all the cuts in one direction first, paying close attention to where the cuts need to stop and start.



Perpendicular Cuts – With the first half of the angled basket weave cuts made, Eric adjusts the position of the spoon, and starts to make the perpendicular cuts. Raking light will prove to be very helpful at this stage.



Add Depth – Once the basket weave pattern is complete, Eric adds many small details to help bring the design to life. In this case, he adds two small cuts and a slightly larger cut to imply the “strips” are going above and below each other. These small cuts mimic a shadow and texture that would be on a real basket weave.



Oil the Spoon – Now that the kolrosing design has been cut into the handle of the spoon and any pencil marks have been erased, the spoon can be oiled.



Coffee Time – Finely ground coffee is the most commonly used substance for adding pigment to a kolrosed design. The finer the better, so a mortar and pestle is great to use after the beans go through a coffee grinder.

is a good chance a lot of your design will wipe off as you go. You should still be able to see it, but if it fades too much, just pencil it in again as needed.

Begin with the border edges. Brace your knife cuts against the fingers of your non-dominant hand as you go in order to reduce chances of any slipping. Proceed little by little until you reach the end, trying not to remove the knife until you’ve reached the end of a particular line in your design. Holding it up in the light will allow you to see the cuts, rather than the pencil, so you can easily check for symmetry.

Once you’ve finished your border, you can begin kolrosing the weave within. What I like to do is draw each line (down the three squares on each side) one way, and then the other to complete the boxes. Everyone has their own approach, though. Keep holding it up to the light to see if you have missed any spots.

This in itself is already a proper basket weave, however if you add little details, it will look just a bit more elaborate, and add to the depth of the visual. This can be done with little knife marks or dots with the knife tip. Just get creative and have fun.

Oiling and applying pigment

It is now time to oil the spoon. You usually only need enough oil to fill your spoon bowl, and you can use this amount to spread around your spoon until it is nice and slick. Don't wipe off the excess with a paper towel just yet.

With the oil still slick on the spoon, sprinkle some of your pigment over the cuts. You will not need much, and can place more as needed. Next, rub the pigment into the cuts until you can see it has set in properly. Feel free to do a second, or even a third, rub until you're happy with how visible the design is. If it's just not coming out as you'd like, your cuts might not be deep or wide enough. Some experimentation might be in order.

Now you can wipe off all excess oil and pigment, and give it one last final burnishing over the kolrosing design. This is an important step, as it closes the wood fibres over the pigment and locks it in permanently. Let the finish cure adequately before using it.

You now have a handmade design on a hand-carved spoon made completely with simple hand tools. It has the imperfect qualities that make handmade items unique and special. Now, make another spoon, this time with a slightly different handle, and try your hand at a different design. And don't be afraid to use this technique on a spoon bowl, or even the back of a handle. You can never have too many spoons, and they make wonderful gifts. Especially when they include kolrosing.

Carlos is a husband, father and carver of wood, living in Ottawa, Ontario. Following a tradition of green wood-working, he uses hand tools to create spoons and other wooden items from tree trimmings and naturally fallen branches.



CARLOS ERIC
carlos@9homeworlds.com



Bring it to Life – Use your finger to rub the coffee grounds into the cuts in the wood. This is when the design will really start to come alive.



Burnish the Design – After another light application of oil over the design, use a smooth stone or another smooth, hard object to burnish the kolrosed surface. This helps to close the gaps in the wood fibres, and locks the coffee pigment into place.



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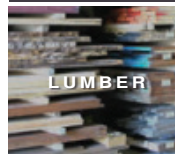
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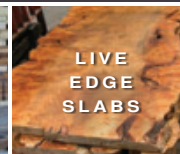
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Stir Crazy in Isolation

Between working from home, dealing with your young kids, and maintaining your sanity, there isn't a lot of time or energy left over for honing those carpentry skills.



BY JAMES JACKSON

So how has everyone been managing during this period of social isolation?

No doubt we've all had plenty of time to toil away in the workshop, perfecting those difficult techniques that we said we'd always learn if we just had a little more time and fewer distractions at work.

Or, if you're like me, you're toiling away in a makeshift basement home office attempting to return phone calls and emails using a spotty wireless internet connection all the while trying to tune out your two kids, both under the age of five.

Social isolation during the coronavirus pandemic has been anything but a home carpentry dream. Here are a few observations from my COVID-19 isolation:

If you really need an excuse to fix that hole in the drywall six months after moving the thermostat (that's a whole other story you read about in an earlier issue), try staring at it for a couple of weeks straight while stuck in isolation. It won't take long before you go online, order a drywall patch and learn how to use it.

By the way, it's harder than it seems to seamlessly blend those patches with the existing wall.

In fact, the entire list of things to do doesn't go away just because a global health emergency forced businesses to close and people to socially isolate in their homes. The items that are on the list seem all the more pressing when you're home 24 hours a day and they're staring you in the face all day.

People had really bad taste in paint colour decades ago. I took down an old kitchen cupboard that hung above the dinner table

only to uncover khaki brown, canary yellow, robin's egg blue and avocado green. No doubt, a few years from now the light grey we covered those colours with will seem cold, unwelcoming and outdated.

As my wife prepared to load a 13-pound turkey into the roasting pan for Easter dinner, she asked if I had any spare twine or string to tie the legs. I didn't, but what I did find was a spool of 16-gauge wire. "I think this will work," I told her. And it did.

If you're trying to hang a shelf in the middle of a wall, and the wall is only about eight feet long and centered between two door-frames, people will definitely notice if it's off centre by just an inch or two. Especially your significant other.

Oh, and stabbing yourself in the palm of your hand with one of those mini screwdrivers used for dismantling electronics really, really hurts.

Working from home sucks. Your routine is all out of whack. Showering becomes a rare occurrence. Meals just turn into day-long grazing sessions. You're less likely to venture into the outside world. Home centres are closed and you have to order ahead. And your kids will drive you crazy.

But you know what? Once this virus clears up and we're finally allowed back to work and school, I know I'm going to miss them.

Stay safe and take care.

JAMES JACKSON
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Illustration by Mike Del Rizzo



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