
Carved Fruit Bowl



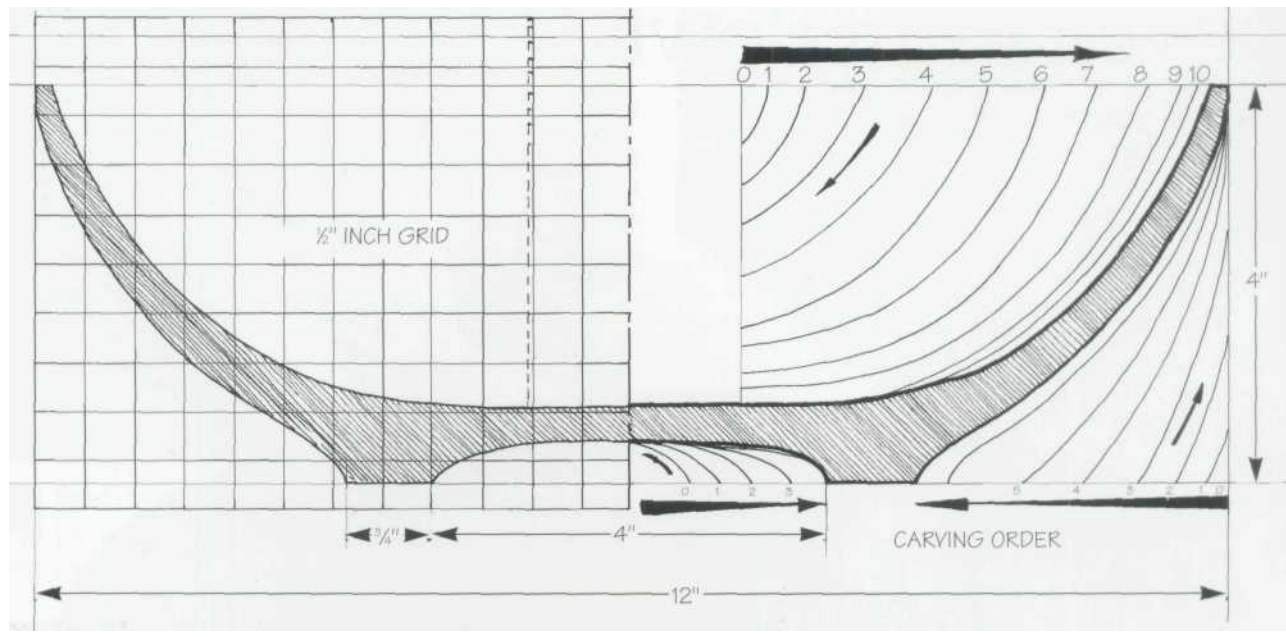
There is something magical about carving bowls. Do you know what I mean? One moment you have a slab of wood—nothing very special, just a piece of wood that might or might not end up on the fire—and the next moment you have a carved bowl that is a useful part and parcel of your life. We have this bowl that my Welsh grandfather made. It wouldn't win prizes and it isn't so beautiful, and it is a bit stained and has somehow been slightly scorched on one side, but for all that, it has always been with me. When I was a kid with chicken pox, the bowl was filled with apples and placed beside the bed; it was beside me when I was studying for my exams; it was given to me when I got married, and no doubt I will give

it to one of my sons somewhere along the line. It has become an heirloom, something precious!

So there you go, if you are looking to make a special gift, one that might well see the next millennium in and out, then perhaps this is the project for you.

CARVING THE BOWL

Before you do anything else, you need to search out a block of easy-to-carve wood about 4" thick, 12" wide, and 12" along the run of the grain. You could use a wood like lime, a fruit wood, a piece of yellow pine, or whatever, as long as it's relatively easy to carve and free from splits and knots.



Pencil label the two 12" X 12" faces, one "top rim" and the other "foot rim." Now, with the slab set "top rim" face uppermost, first draw crossed diagonals to establish top-center; then use the compass or dividers to scribe out two circles, one with a radius of 6" and one with a radius of 5 1/2". Rerun this procedure on the "foot rim" side of the slab, only this time have the two circles at 2 3/4" radius and 2" radius. When you're happy with the way the wood has been set out, use a band saw to cut out the blank. This clone, move to the drill press and run a good size pilot hole into the center of the "top rim" side of the wood. Drill down to a depth of exactly 3 1/4". I used a 2"-diameter Forstner bit, but a 1"-diameter would be fine. Being mindful that the bottom of the hole marks both the level of the inside bowl and the thickness of the base, it is vital that you don't go deeper than 3 1/4".

With the workpiece set down on the bench so that the "top rim" face is uppermost, take a mallet and a straight, shallow sweep gouge and work around the rim of the drilled hole cutting back the waste. The working procedure should go something like this: Work once around the hole scooping out a ring of waste, work around this initial ring scooping out another ring of waste, and so on, all the while backing up until you reach what will become the inside rim of the bowl. When you have cleared one level of waste, return to the edge of the drilled hole and

start over. So you continue, clearing the waste level by level until you begin to establish the beautiful shape of the inside of the bowl.

Use whatever tools best do the job. For example, I started with the straight gouge and the mallet, then changed to a front-bent gouge, and finally I switched to using a small hooked knife for tidying up.

When the shape of the inside of the bowl is well established, turn the workpiece over so that the base is uppermost, and set to work carving and shaping in much the same way as already described. The carving procedure for the outside of the bowl is pretty straightforward, only this time you need to work in two directions—from the inside edge of the foot ring and in toward the center of the base, and from the outside edge of the foot ring and out and down towards the rim.

And so you resume, carving the inside of the foot ring a little, carving the bold convex shape of the outside of bowl profile, carving the inside of the bowl a tad more, and so on and on, until the wall thickness ranges between about 3/8" at the rim to 5/8" outside the foot ring. And of course, all along the way, you have to keep your tools razor sharp so that each and every cut is clean, crisp and controlled. As you get nearer to the beautiful bowl shape that is hidden just below the surface of the wood, you have to be more and more cautious with your cuts.

SPECIAL TIPS AND RULES OF THUMB

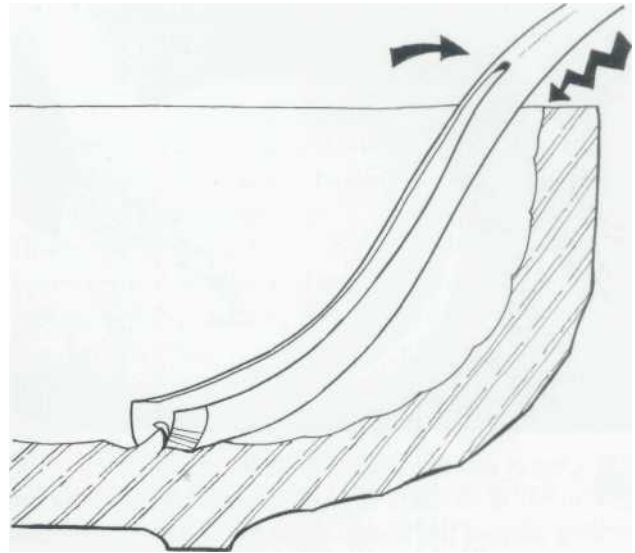
It's all straight forward, as long as you stay with the following guidelines:

- Try to set up a work rhythm—carve for a few minutes, then stroke the tool on the stone and strop, then stand back and be critical, and then go back to a few minutes of carving, and so on. You will find that this way of working ensures that everything is controlled . . . the tools stay sharp, you have time to assess your progress, and you don't get tired.

- As the bowl nears completion, you will find that it is more difficult to grip and hold the bowl. The best way is to either cradle it in your lap or nestle it on a pile of rags.

- When you are carving the inside of the bowl—when it's nearly finished—you have to be extra careful that you don't lever on and break the relatively fragile rim. To prevent this end, you might need to use one of the bent gouges rather than a straight gouge. I would recommend either a no. 5 bent gouge at about 3/4" wide, or perhaps a no. 7 spoon gouge at about the same width. Be mindful that the flatter the sweep (meaning the shape of the blade in cross section) the greater the chance that the corners of the blade will cut and tear the wood.

STEP-BY-STEP STAGES

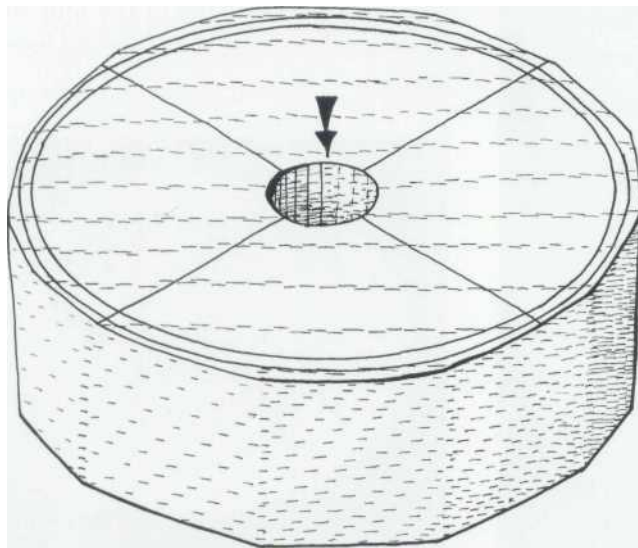


CARVING THE BOWL INTERIOR

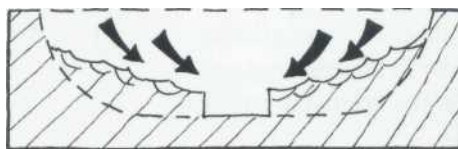
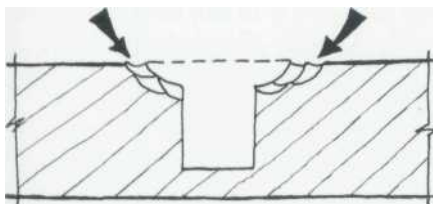
*The swooping shape of the bent **gouge** lets you carve the concave curve without levering the shaft of the tool on the **fragile** rim.*

MATERIALS LIST

A Piece of wood (1)	4"×12"×12"—with the grain running along the length, meaning across the bowl
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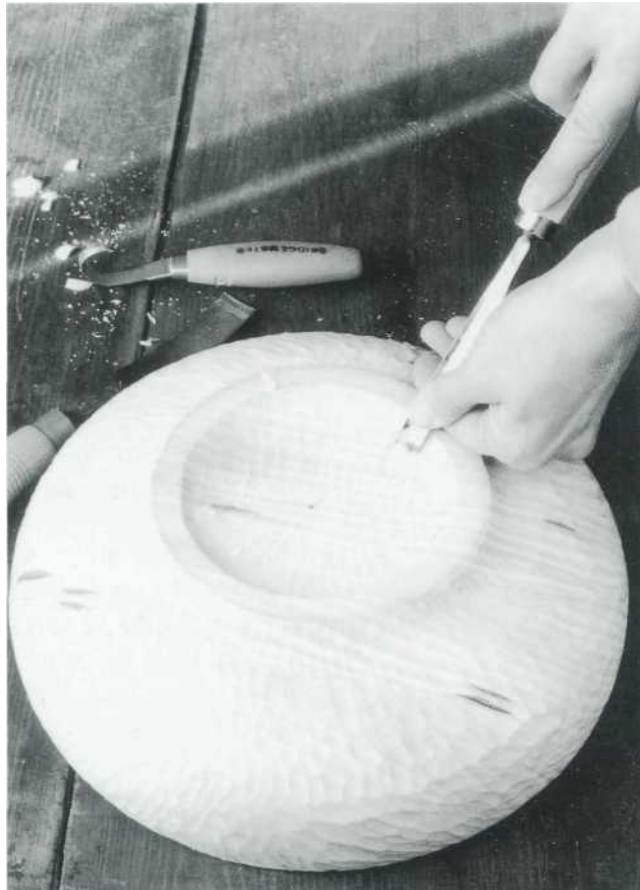


1 Having established the center of the square slab by drawing crossed diagonals and cutting the circular blank, use the 2" diameter Forstner bit to run a 3 1/4"-deep pilot hole down into the center (top). Work around the hole clearing the waste (bottom left). Clear the waste level by level, all the while backing up from the pilot hole through to the rim (bottom right).

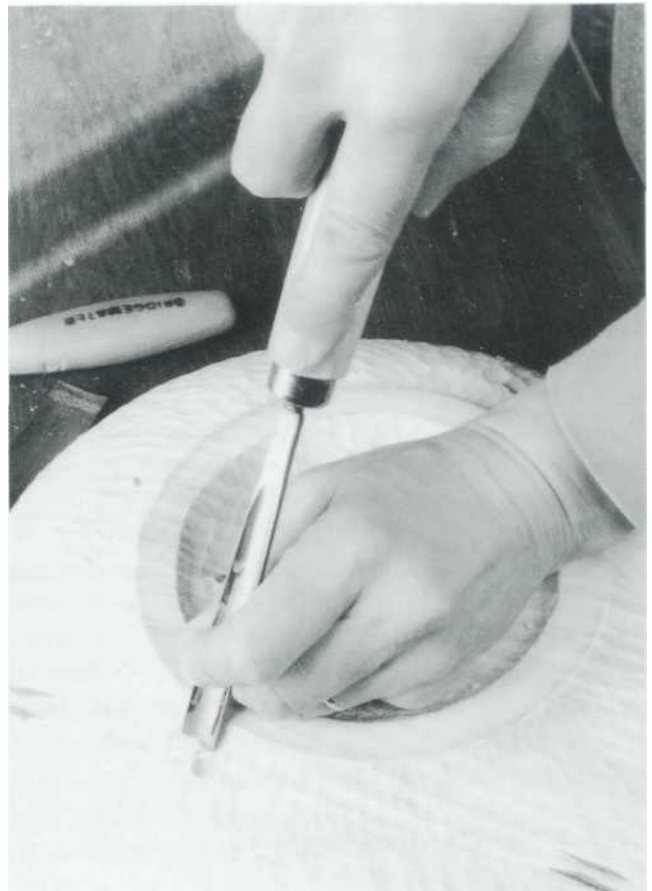




2 One of the easiest ways to bring the bowl to a good finish is to use a hooked sloyd knife. As you are working around the inside of the bowl, be mindful that all along the way you will need to adjust your angle of cut to suit the ever-changing run of the grain.



3 When you come to carve the inside of the foot—meaning the inside of the base ring—use small, controlled cuts, with one hand pushing and the other guiding and being ready to break. Notice how in this instance you can lever the shank of the tool on the relatively strong foot rim.



4 The beautiful concave curve shape that runs down from the outside of the foot rim is achieved by thrusting down with the blade and levering back with the handle.



5 All along the way you will have to make repeated checks with the caliper. Try to aim for a section that starts relatively thick at the base and gradually tapers up to a thin rim.

A GOOD WOOD GUIDE FOR CARVING

Wood carving is a wonderfully fulfilling and exciting area of woodworking, but only, if you choose the right wood. When I first started carving, I had in mind to carve a female torso, a Venus. I'm sure you know what I mean, a bit like Marilyn Monroe, but more so. Though my teacher told me to use lime, when I arrived at the wood yard and saw the astronomical prices, I was swiftly talked into buying—at a quarter of the price of lime—a massive piece of I-don't-know-what.

Well, when I got my "bargain" wood back to the workshop, it was a nightmare. The wood was green and wet, it was lull of iron-hard knots, it started to warp and split the moment I started carving, it made my tools rusty, the grain was wild and twisted—I could continue listing its terrible qualities. Yes, I did manage to finish my carving, but at what cost to my strength and sanity? It was truly awful, a sort of mad mix-up between Marilyn Monroe and a glandular Guernsey!

The moral of this sad little tale from my teenage years is there are no shortcuts, and there are very few bargains. You *must* use a piece of good wood. The following listing will help you on your way:

Alder—A sapwood tree common in low-lying areas. A wood traditionally used by North American Indians and early settlers, it is especially good for bowls and general kitchenwares.

American Whitewood—Known variously as tulipwood, basswood, canary wood, and many other names besides, this is a soft, easy-to-carve wood.

Apple—A hard dense, close-grained fruitwood, it comes in small sizes, carves well and takes a good polish. Apple is traditionally used for small items of treen (woodenware), and for kitchenwares.

Beech—A heavy, relatively easy-to-carve wood that has a yellow-gold sapwood and a reddish heart. Beech is particular! good for carved furniture.

Boxwood—A beautiful, pleasant-smelling, butter-smooth wood that is extremely hard and close-grained. If you want to carve items like jewelry, hair combs, small dishes and boxes, then boxwood is a good choice.

Cedar—Pencil Cedar is a favorite wood for carving. It cuts to a clear pink-brown finish.

Cherry—American cherry is a close-grained, hard-to-work, reddish brown wood that comes in relatively small widths. It carves well and can be brought to a wonderful high-shine finish.

Hickory—Straight-grained with a white sapwood and reddish brown heartwood, hickory is often the first choice for large sculptural carvings.

Horse Chestnut—White if it is felled in winter, and yellow-brown if it is felled later in the year, this wood is especially good for carved furniture details and for dairy and kitchenwares.

Holly—A close-grained, ivory-white wood that carves well and takes fine details, it is a good wood for small desktop toys, and kitchenwares.

Lime—English lime is one of my favorite woods. Butter-colored, close-grained and easy to carve, it is the traditional choice for architectural work, like mirror surrounds, coats-of-arms, small sculptures and interior trim. Though linden or basswood are often described as being the same as lime, they are to my way of thinking quite different.

Maple—Soft maple is the traditional choice for general carvers—used for making such things as furniture, domestic wares and musical instruments—while rock maple is preferred for heavier items like sports gear and some laundry wares.

Pear—A pink-brown wood that has a close-grained, satiny finish. It's really good for kitchenwares.

Plum—One of my favorite woods. Though it is certainly very difficult to carve, the color and texture are special—especially good for small presentation pieces.

Sycamore—A hard, light-colored wood, it carves and finishes well. Sycamore is a top choice for dairy and kitchenwares, where it is important that the wood leave no smell or taint.

Yellow Pine—White to reddish light brown, it is good for large sculptural carvings and interior details. It has been used traditionally in shipbuilding and interior joinery. If you order the wood unseen, be sure to specify "smooth first growth." If you don't, there is a good chance that you will be given poor-grade, coarse and knotty second growth.