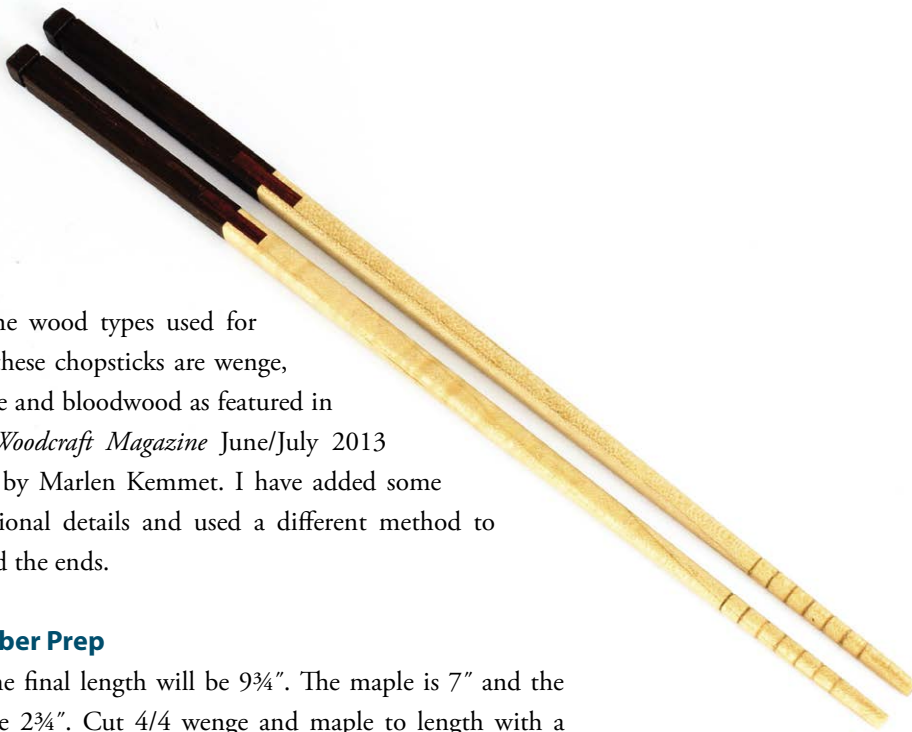


Decorative Chopsticks



The wood types used for these chopsticks are wenge, maple and bloodwood as featured in the *Woodcraft Magazine* June/July 2013 issue by Marlen Kemmet. I have added some additional details and used a different method to round the ends.

Lumber Prep

The final length will be $9\frac{3}{4}$ ". The maple is 7" and the wenge $2\frac{3}{4}$ ". Cut $\frac{1}{4}$ " wenge and maple to length with a half inch extra for final trimming later. In order to run the boards through the thickness planer cut the maple length to get two finished lengths of 7"—net result four pieces. Cut the wenge to get four finished lengths of $3\frac{3}{4}$ ". Resaw them on the bandsaw (Photo 1) and surface plane them to a final thickness of $\frac{5}{16}$ ". Run both materials at the same time so they finish out at the same thickness.

The Dado

Joint one edge and square up the ends of the blanks. Use a flat-top grind saw blade (box-cutter blade) to cut the spline dado on a test piece. A bevel grind blade will leave a tiny gap at the corners. Start by measuring the two flanks with a digital caliper (Photos 2-3) and then run a cut from either side to confirm the dados are perfectly centered (Photo 4). Depth of cut is $\frac{3}{8}$ ". Add a measure of accuracy by marking the blanks face up (fence side).

The Spline

The grain needs to be parallel with the blank. Run a test piece to set the spline thickness to match the dado width. Use an end cutoff of bloodwood about 2" long and wide enough to cover the width of the M/W boards (Photo 5). Run the bloodwood on end through the tablesaw with the



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blade high enough to cover the width of the dado about $\frac{3}{4}$ " (Photo 6). Now run a test piece for the width of the dado and make the final four cuts using a push block (Photos 7-8). Test fit and cut the splines to length.

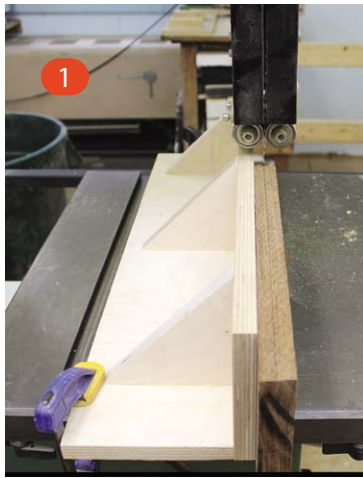
Glue up

Use Titebond III—a waterproof glue. Spread glue in the dado using a small painters brush, coat the spline and press the two blanks together with face side up (rip fence side) to assure a flush glue joint. Clamp and let set overnight (Photo 9). I forgot to lay wax paper atop the pipe clamps and got that nasty black mark from the pipe. I was able to card scrape it off but with little effort it can be avoided. This would be a good time to card scrape and sand while the blanks are whole.

Cut & Detail the Top Section of the Sticks

Joint one edge and cut both maple and wenge ends to final length. Run a test piece with a width to match the blank thickness. Finish the stick to be $\frac{5}{16}$ " x $\frac{5}{16}$ ". Run them all using a push stick or block (Photo 10).

Tip the saw blade to 45°, set a gauge block off the fence and make a 45° cut about a quarter inch down from the top



to create a thin decorative kerf on all four sides (Photo 11). Cut the top 45° on a sander. Use a push-stick (Photo 12) clamped to the sliding table with the end cut at a 45.

Glue a stop block at the tip. Adjust the push stick until the desired 45 is cut on the stick and clamp it down (Photos 13-15). Sand four sides.

Cut the Taper

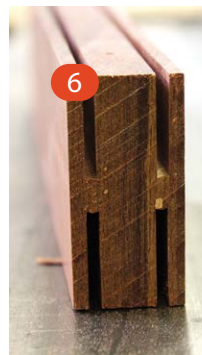
Custom taper sleds were used to cut the tapers on the sticks. Use sled #1 to cut tapers 1 & 2 (Photos 16-17). Since this creates a taper on two sides, a second sled (Photos 18-19) accounting for the taper, is used to cut tapers 3 & 4. This will create even tapers on all four sides and leaves a small square on the end of the stick (Photo 20). Note the hold-down clamps with hold down bars.

The bars were undercut so the ends will apply pressure on the stick regardless of whether or not they were flush with the top of the sled (Photo 21). With a “V” block in the bench vice to hold the stick edge up, make a couple of passes with a hand plane on all four corners (Photo 22). The stick ends are now almost round and with a little sanding they are pretty much there. The tips don't need to be perfectly round. Do not forget to ease the edges of the upper wenge section.

Gripper Grooves

I was selling these at a Craft Fair and was asked by a customer to custom make him some chopsticks with small grooves at the end. The grooves in theory help to hold food and keep it from sliding off the sticks. I agreed to the commission and came up with a way to cut seven consistently spaced grooves at the tip.

I made a holding V block with a taper on the bottom side to match the shape of my tool rest. It holds on the rest



using one clamp (Photo 23). Then, using a Japanese pull saw (seemed appropriate) I made seven evenly spaced saw cuts. Because it's a pull saw the lathe needed to be turning in reverse.

Using double face tape, I glued wood blocks inside the chuck jaws in which to clamp the sticks and not mar them (Photo 24). Clamping the sticks with the tip at a mark on the holding block and holding the stick in the groove with one hand I can make light, evenly spaced cuts (Photos 25-26).

Finish

I finished them with a shop made beeswax/mineral oil mixture. The mixture is one-part wax to four parts mineral oil by weight. Coat the stick with a liberal amount, let set a few minutes and wipe dry. Re-coat as needed.

By ourselves we can be pretty smart when it comes to making things, but collectively, we can be much smarter. Lots of the techniques that I use were learned from others but I guess that's the mission of the Guild isn't it! I think it's working! ■

