

Turning Platters

By Marty Kaminsky

Like most things in turning, there are many ways to get the same result. This procedure is not intended to show all the ways, just my way. Although I mention a few variations of chucking, the basic procedure is to attach a disk (platter blank) to a glue block, turn the top of the platter, then reverse chuck and turn the bottom of the platter.



Finishing can be done on the lathe as you proceed or off the lathe after the piece is complete. My favorite finishes are on the last page.

Preparation

1. Cut a disk (platter blank) from 1" to 2" stock.
2. Attach a glue block on a face plate (I use a 3" faceplate) or mount the glue block in a scroll chuck. [Glue block a new concept? It's a chunk of wood mounted on a face plate or in a scroll chuck whose edges and face you've trued. The glue block is glued to your work piece to provide a method of attaching the work to lathe head stock drive shaft.]

3. Draw a circle slightly larger than the glue block on what will be the underside of the platter (figure 1).

4. Using thick CA glue (superglue), glue the glue block to the platter using the circle to center it (figures 2 and 3). Note the recess in the glue block.



Figure 1

5. After the glue dries mount the faceplate or chuck on the lathe.



Figure 2

6. True the disk's surface and edge (I use a bowl gouge).



Figure 3

Turning the top of the platter

7. Shape the top of the platter with your bowl gouge, working from the outside toward the center.
8. Use a round nose scraper to touch up (remove ripples) if necessary.
9. Shape the first inch or two of the bottom of the platter (figure 4).
10. Sand the top and first inch or so of the bottom.

11. If finishing on the lathe, finish the top and first inch of the bottom. When I finish on the lathe, I use a fast drying approach such as the Raffin oil and wax finish or the wipe on lacquer finish (see Finishes)



Figure 4

12. Part off the glue block.

Turning the bottom of the platter

13. Reverse chuck the platter using Jumbo Jaws (Cole Jaws), step jaws, a loose fit jam chuck (close enough to center the platter, but not too tight) and tail stock with a live center (figures 5–9). Another way to reverse chuck your platter is to use a "friction plate" (not shown). A friction plate is a disk with a layer of foam rubber on one side, mounted on a screw chuck or a face plate. The friction plate is mounted



Figure 5



Figure 6



Figure 7

on the headstock and the platter is positioned with its top surface against the foam. The tail stock with a live center presses the platter (top of platter against foam) into the foam.



Figure 8



Figure 9

Shape the bottom (bowl gouge).

2. If you used a jam chuck or friction plate with the tail stock holding the platter in place, you'll be left with a nub that must be pared off with a chisel or knife. Then sand the area to blend it in. Or, you may be able to secure the platter in the jam chuck with tape so that you can back off the tail stock and turn off the nub.
3. If finishing on the lathe, finish the bottom.

Favorite Finishes

Except for a friction polish that I use for small items, I primarily use three finishes for all of my work: Minwax Wipe-On Poly, thinned wiped on lacquer, and Raffan's oil and wax finish.

Minwax Wipe-On Poly

- After blowing the sawdust off with an air compressor I wipe on a heavy first coat, let it soak in, then wipe off the excess.
- I generally apply five more additional thin coats, allowing three to four hours to dry between coats, and steel wooling with 0000 wool, sanding with 400 grit sand paper, or rubbing with 3M Scotchbrite gray (extra fine) synthetic steel wool between coats.
- After the last coat is rubbed or sanded, apply a coat of paste wax, let dry, then buff.

Wiped on lacquer

- Thin a brushing lacquer such as Deft Gloss Clear Wood Finish with an equal amount of lacquer thinner.
- After blowing the sawdust off with an air compressor, wipe on a heavy first coat, let it soak in, then wipe off the excess,

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if any.

- This finish will dry fairly quickly and can be hurried quite a bit more with a hair dryer or an incandescent lamp eight or ten inches away.
- Apply a total of about 6 coats, rubbing with 0000 steel wool or 3M Scotchbrite gray (extra fine) synthetic steel wool between coats.
- After the last coat is dry and rubbed with steel wool or Scotchbrite, apply a coat of paste wax, let dry, then buff.

Raffan's linseed oil and bee's wax finish

Richard Raffan demonstrated this finish during his visit to our club. He says he uses it on most of his work. It has a low sheen on most woods. He claims it to be a good utilitarian finish on pieces used for serving food, requiring only occasional re-oiling.

- Brush off the sawdust. I'm not too particular and don't blow it off with a compressor.
- Wipe on a heavy coat of boiled linseed oil. After a moment for the oil to soak in, remove any excess.
- With the lathe running at low speed, give the piece another wipe, then apply the beeswax by rubbing a chunk of wax on the piece as it turns.
- With the lathe running slowly (about 500 rpm) buff the wax.