Serving ladle

Walter Hall shows how to make a wonderful two-part ladle for the kitchen

PHOTOGRAPHS BY WALTER HALL

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ANDREW POTOCNIK

All the projects in this series have been made using a midi-lathe and a basic toolkit that most amateur woodturners would have available in their workshop. The intention was to demonstrate the wide range of projects that are possible within the constraints of the tools and machinery that can fit into a small workshop or shed, and that creativity need not be constrained by the size of your lathe or the range of equipment available to you.

This month's project demonstrates how, with a little thought, even a project that at first appears outside the scope of a machine with a swing over the bed of 320mm, can be accommodated by breaking the work down into components. The project also shows how to make a wooden collet-type chuck that can be used to hold the work for hollowing.

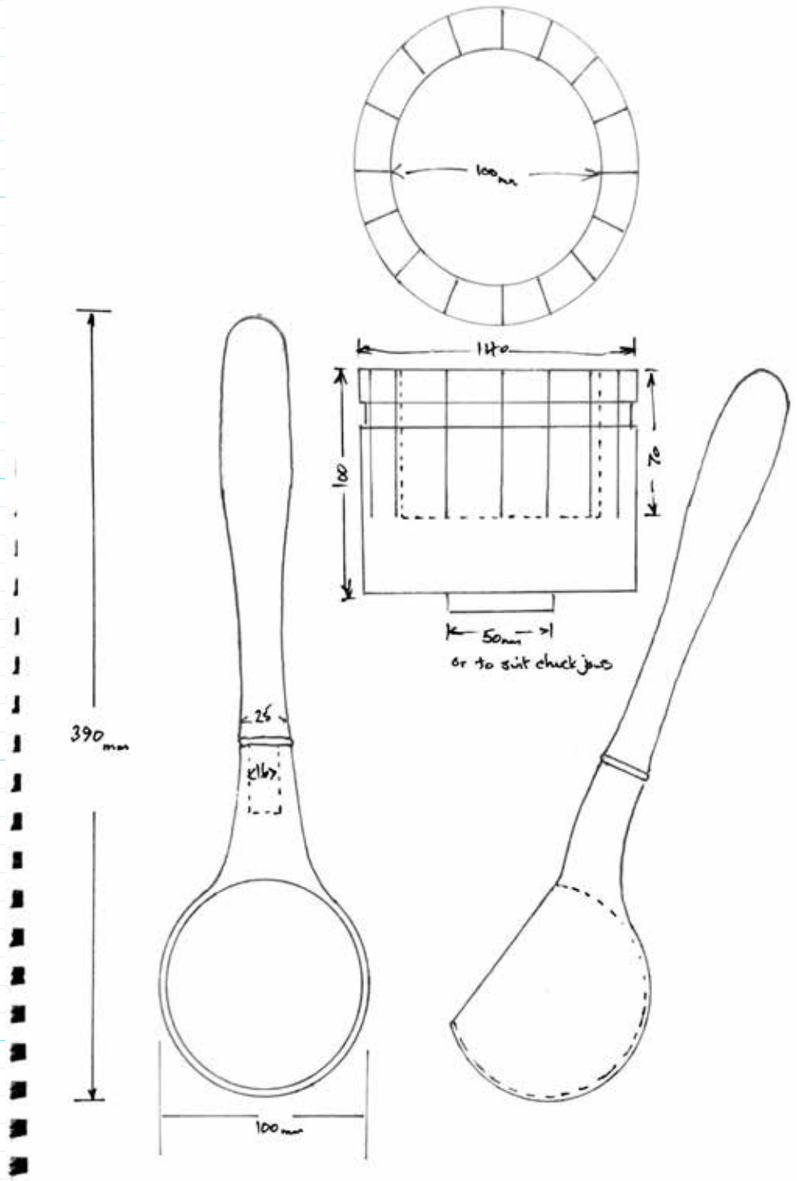
The woods traditionally used for kitchen implements are beech and sycamore, and for this project I chose beech for no other reason than that was what I had available. You may observe that the blank used to make the bowl of the ladle displays some spalting. Some consider this unsafe for food use, but since in this case the finished ladle is more likely to be used for decoration than put into daily use, I was happy to use this blank. Of greater concern to me than the safety of the finished product is the possibility of allergic reaction to the spores in the spalted wood. However, as you should be using appropriate respiratory protection when turning any wood, protecting yourself from this risk should be a matter of course.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal and respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Spindle roughing gouge
- Beading and parting tool
- Skew chisel of your preferred type
- Spindle gouge
- Bowl gouge
- Scroll chuck
- Drive spur
- Revolving tailstock centre
- Drill chuck and 16mm Forstner bit
- Fine-toothed saw
- Callipers
- Cable tie

MATERIALS

- Beech (*Fagus* spp) or sycamore (*Acer pseudoplatanus*) blank 120x 120 x160mm
- Beech or sycamore blank 40 x 40 x 300mm
- Wood blank to form collet chuck (see step 12)
- Abrasives as required
- Finish of your choice



1 Mount the larger blank that will form the bowl of the ladle between centres and turn it to a cylinder using the spindle roughing gouge. A super-fine finish is not required at this stage but I never pass up an opportunity to practise achieving a good finish from the tool. Skewing the gouge will achieve a planing cut which, with practise, can give a finish from the tool that requires no sanding.

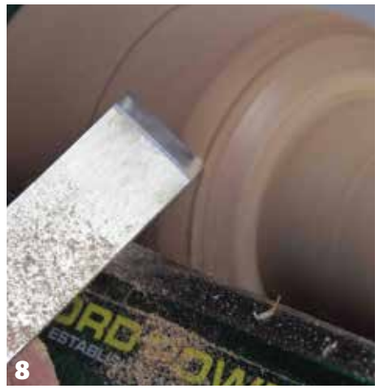
2 Once you have a true cylinder, measure the diameter using callipers. This is an important step in achieving a well-shaped form to the bowl of the ladle, which is, to some extent, similar in the initial stages to turning a sphere.

3 Transfer the measured dimension to the work, remembering to leave sufficient wood at the headstock end to allow for a chucking point to be formed. In the posed photograph the callipers are shown against the end of the blank. This is incorrect – they should be inboard from the headstock end by the depth of your chuck jaws.

4 Using a beading and parting tool, form a chucking point on the headstock end of the blank. This should be turned carefully to the correct dimensions for your jaws and adjusted to a dovetail shape if necessary, depending on the jaw design. Ensure that the face of the blank that will sit against the jaws is true, tidying it up with a skew chisel as required.

5 Using the chucking point you have just formed, mount the blank in your chuck and with a 16mm Forstner bit fitted into a tailstock drill chuck the hole that will form the mortise into which the long part of the handle will fit. Drill deep enough to form a strong mortise but take care not to drill too deep or your mortise will break through when hollowing the body of the ladle.

6 Remove the work from the chuck and return it to between centres. Now remove the bulk of the waste from the handle end of the blank. You could do this with a spindle roughing gouge or a spindle gouge, but a quick and easy way is to use a broad skew chisel flat on the rest as a negative rake scraper.



7 Once you have roughed out the shape, mark the centre point of the body of the bowl. This will form the datum point for the shape of the bowl and should still be evident when the shape is complete.

8 Now continue to refine the shape of the bowl using the point of the large skew chisel, working from the ends towards the datum mark and carefully observing the shape of the form as it develops to achieve as close to a spherical form as possible.

9 At the handle end, blend the curve of the bowl into the handle using a spindle gouge and turn down the handle to its finished diameter. Take care not to turn too thin as a good wall thickness is required for the handle mortise.

10 Continue to refine the shape of the bowl and handle until you have achieved a spherical form to the body and this is blended neatly into the handle. A cardboard template is useful to check that the diameter of the spherical section is equal in all directions.

11 Part off the work from the headstock end almost all the way through using a skew chisel to achieve a nice, clean finish, leaving only a small nub that can be cut away with a sharp knife or chisel and sanded to final shape.

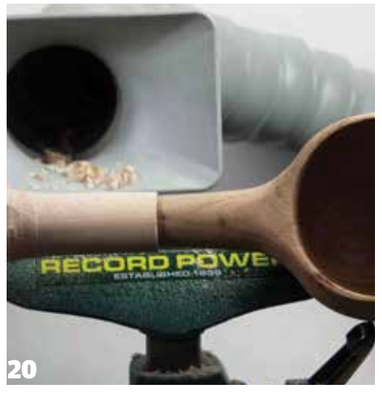
12 Set the partly completed work aside while you make the collet chuck to hold it during the next stage. You will need a blank that will provide a cylinder about 25mm all round larger than the bowl of the ladle. The choice of wood is not critical, but it must be sufficiently flexible for the jaws of the collet chuck to grip the work. I used an offcut from an oak fence post, but a more flexible wood such as ash or even a softwood would be suitable.

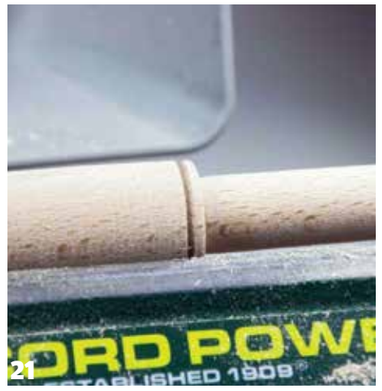
13 Once turned to a cylinder, use exactly the same process as in step 4 to form a chucking point on the headstock end of the blank. This will enable the wooden collet chuck to be held in your scroll chuck and re-used time and time again for similar-sized projects. Alternatively, the blank could be mounted on a faceplate or faceplate ring.

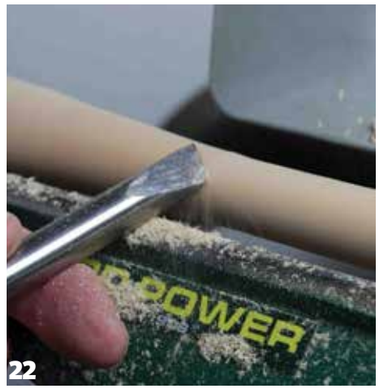
14 Mark the diameter of the ladle body on the end of the blank and begin to hollow it out. A spindle gouge will do this quickly and efficiently. Adjust the toolrest until the cutting tip is on centre with the tool horizontal and the flute at about 9 o'clock, then push the tool gently into the wood along the lathe's centreline to drill an initial hole. Starting with the gouge in the hole and the lower cutting edge at 9 o'clock, gradually work outwards until the hole is the correct size.

15 Use the beading and parting tool to square up the recess, then check that it is deep enough to retain the body of the ladle. Also cut a shallow groove around the outside of the body to retain the clip or cable tie that will be used to secure the work in the chuck.

16 Remove the work from the lathe and cut a series of kerfs around the diameter of the collet chuck body. You can do this by hand with a tenon saw or on the bandsaw, using a suitable jig or sled to hold the work safely. You will also need to cut away a couple of the fingers to accommodate the handle – this can be done with a coping saw or an oscillating multi-tool.







17 Mount the ladle body in the collet chuck, carefully adjusting the position of the handle to the required angle, then tighten the fingers of the chuck on to the work using a jubilee-type pipe clip or a cable tie.

18 The work is now securely held and you can hollow out the bowl of the ladle using a bowl gouge in the normal way. Remember that, unlike making the chuck, you are now working with cross grain as in normal bowl turning. Carefully blend the shape of the handle into the rim of the bowl section. If necessary, this can be refined by hand once the work is removed from the lathe.

19 Mount the handle blank between centres, turn it to a cylinder with the spindle roughing gouge and, with the beading and parting tool, form a tenon to be a good fit in the mortise you created in step 5.

20 Check that the components are a good fit. There should be no slop but sufficient clearance to allow for gluing. A good sliding fit is required.

21 Turn a bead at the end of the handle body adjacent to the tenon to help disguise the joint between the parts. I used the beading and parting tool for this but you could use a skew chisel or even a bead-forming tool.

22 Now form the shape of the handle using a skew chisel. My tool of choice for this is a round skew but any skew will do the job just fine. Or you could use a spindle roughing gouge or continental spindle gouge instead.

23 Form the shape of the end of the handle with the point of the skew. Do not part all the way through but leave a nub to be cut off with a fine saw. This avoids torn or bruised grain and allows a fine finish to be achieved on the end of the work.

24 Cut through the remaining nub with a fine saw then tidy up the end of the handle with abrasives until there is no trace of the nub and no tool marks. Traditionally, wooden kitchen tools were left unfinished but as this is unlikely to ever be used I gave it a coat of protective oil. All that now remains is to glue the two parts together using a good-quality adhesive. If the item is to be used then this must be waterproof and heat resistant.

25 The finished ladle as viewed from the back. ●