

Cheese board and cutlery

Walter Hall prepares for a cheese feast



I have always enjoyed a nice selection of cheeses even though, for health reasons, I am not supposed to eat too much of it, so for me it is a treat that needs to be properly served and presented. I have made many cheese boards over the years, and the first one I made in the early 1990s taught me two lessons that are worth remembering for this project. First, the wood used needs to be dry enough to remain stable in the, probably centrally heated, environment in which it will be used. Second, the marble or slate insert needs to be fixed in such a way that the differential expansion of the two materials will not cause either wood or insert to crack. My failure to use dry timber or to take this differential into account resulted in the wood splitting as it dried, cracking the marble insert in the process.

Another important factor in ensuring the longevity of the

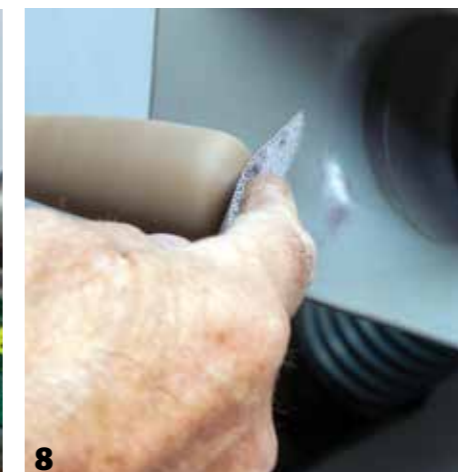
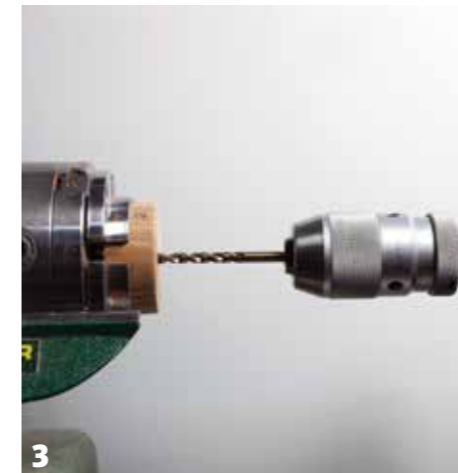
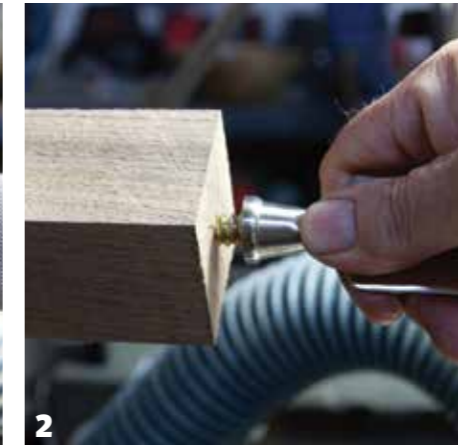
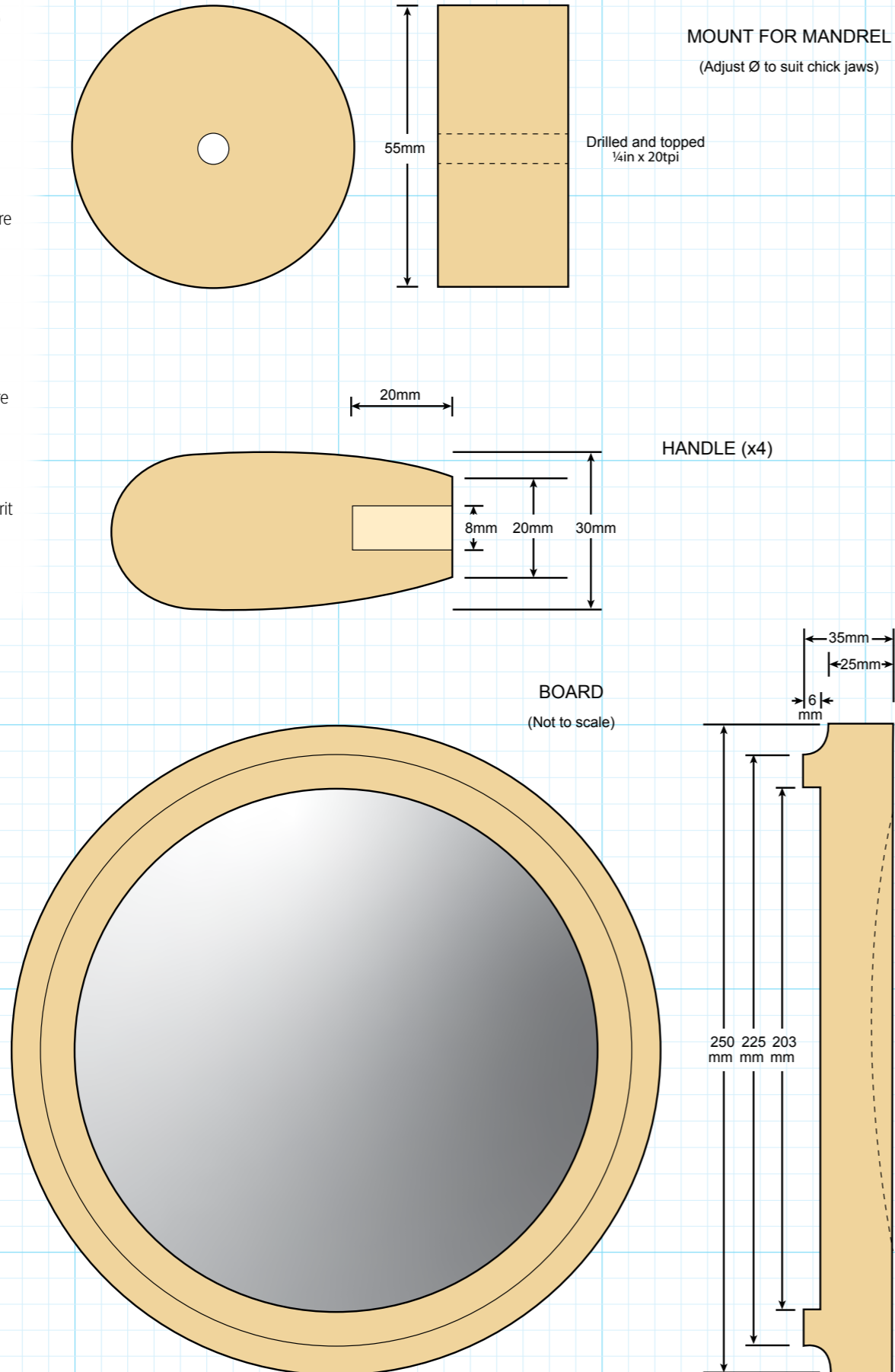
finished products is the choice of finish. Since the cheese is primarily in contact with the metal components of the cutlery and the marble part of the cheese board, a food-safe finish is not, strictly speaking, a necessity on the wooden parts but common sense suggests finishes that may taint the food should be avoided. The set will also need to be washed or cleaned in some way, so this also needs to be taken into account. Food-safe oil is one possible choice, but for the handles I prefer a hard finish such as an acrylic lacquer, which provides reasonably robust protection if washed. I would, however, since this set comes easily apart by unscrewing, remove the metal components for cleaning as they can then be thoroughly cleaned or even put in a dishwasher. The wooden parts can then be wiped clean with less risk of damage to the finish.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS

- Personal & respiratory protective equipment (PPE & RPE)
- Spindle gouge
- Skew chisel
- Bowl gouge
- Chuck
- Faceplate
- Revolving tailstock centre
- Tailstock drill chuck and drill bits
- Tapping chuck and 1/4in x 20tpi (optional)

MATERIALS

- 4 x walnut spindle blanks 40-50mm square min. 80mm long
- Walnut bowl blank min. 275mm diameter
- Marble tile
- Abrasives 120 to 400 grit
- Silicone adhesive
- Acrylic lacquer spray (or finish of choice)



Cutlery

1 Begin by preparing the four blanks for the cutlery set. The metal components are held in the handles by means of threaded inserts. With the blank mounted in a scroll chuck, use an 8mm drill in a tailstock chuck to drill a hole to the depth of the insert.

2 Now screw the insert into the prepared blank while still mounted in the chuck. Unlike others I have used, the inserts have no hex key recess or other means of fitting, so I found the best way to install them is to screw the flat-bladed knife into each insert in turn and use this to screw them into the blank.

3 Begin preparing the mandrel by mounting a suitable offset in the scroll chuck and drilling a 19/64in hole for the setscrew that will be used to hold the blanks in place. This must be a 1/4in x 20tpi screw to match the threads on the insert. Note how I have marked the blank so it can be removed from the chuck and remounted in the same position. This is important to maintain accuracy.

4 The best way to cut the threads for the setscrew is with a 1/4in x 20tpi tap mounted in a tap chuck, but a hand held tap would work if used carefully or, if no suitable tap is available, the setscrew could be used to cut its own thread.

5 Remove the drilled blank from the chuck and screw in the setscrew from the back of the blank. Remount it in the chuck taking care to align with the mark made in step 3 and the indents made by the chuck jaws. Now slide a suitable bush in place. The ones from a Panache pen kit are a good match.

6 The previously prepared blanks can now be screwed to the mandrel and initially supported with a tailstock revolving centre, ready to be turned to shape.

7 Now turn each handle to shape using your choice of tool. A spindle gouge would work well but I find a better finish from the tool can be achieved with a skew chisel. Carefully match the size of the ends of the handles to the bush to ensure a good fit to the metal components later.

8 Now remove the tailstock support, part off the waste and sand through the grits as necessary to achieve a good finish. Remember to use appropriate PPE and dust extraction when sanding.

9 The handles may be finished on or off the lathe with your choice of finish. I used acrylic gloss lacquer, which provides good protection against water ingress when the cutlery is cleaned.

Cheese board

10 Prepare the blank for the board by finding the centre and mounting it on a faceplate or faceplate ring. I preferred to use a faceplate ring as this allowed the whole project to be completed without removing the chuck from the lathe or changing jaws. Don't worry about the screw holes, they will be hidden beneath the marble insert.

Mount the work on the lathe, true up the blank with a bowl gouge and carefully measure and cut a tenon to suit the jaws of your chuck. Dovetail it if necessary depending upon the design of the jaws, but make sure the face of the blank is flat so that it runs true.

11 Remove the work from the lathe, turn it around and remount it using the newly cut tenon. Check that everything is running true then mark the position of the screw holes so the faceplate can be remounted in the same position and remove it from the work.

Measure and mark the position of the recess for the marble insert. Remember to leave a little room for differential expansion but don't create a large recess where food can become trapped. Use a bowl gouge to cut the recess to about half the thickness of the insert so that it will stand proud of the finished board.

12 Check for fit regularly as you proceed with the work. A slightly undersized recess can quickly turn into one that is too large if care is not taken, so work methodically and remember that if the recess is 2mm too small then you only need to take 1mm off all round to make it fit.

13 Once you are happy with the recess you can shape the outside of the board. I used a simple cove and marked out its position with pencil lines, but you can make it to any design, as simple or ornate as you choose. A bowl gouge is used to form the shape.

14 Once completed and sanded your chosen finish may be applied to the board while still mounted on the lathe. I used acrylic lacquer to match the handles. Now reattach the faceplate or ring in its original orientation.

15 Remount the work on the lathe using the faceplate or ring and turn away the tenon. The outer edges of the base should be turned flat with a slight concave recess to ensure the board stands steady on an uneven surface. Once complete, remove the work from the lathe and unscrew the faceplate or ring.

16 Use a flexible adhesive (I used a clear silicone) to mount the marble insert. Take care to get it central in the recess with equal clearance all around. N.B. This will cover the screw holes and unless some overzealous member of the woodturning police levers off the insert to check no-one will ever know how it was mounted on the lathe. ●

