
Heart-Shaped Cheese Board



This project had its beginnings in our ever-pressing need to tidy up our workshop. The problem was, of course, what to do with the mountain of offcuts? I'm sure you know what I mean. The chair, table, box or whatever is finished, and you are left with great heaps of wood. Okay, maybe the longer lengths can be used for the next **job** in line, and the shavings can be used as fuel or as bedding for your chickens, and the dust can be swept up and put in the trash, but what to do with the medium-size bits and pieces that look too good to throw away? Well, after a deal of thought, we came up with the

super-brilliant idea of cutting all our small offcuts down to a uniform size, and then laminating the resultant blocks to make cutting boards and surfaces that needed to show end grain. Okay, so it is a solution that involves a **lot** of time, sweat and effort, but then again, the finished boards can be presented or marketed as choice handcrafted items.

So there you go. If you are up to your knees in offcuts, or you are short of cash and maybe know of a sawmill operator who is looking to give away his trimmings free, then perhaps this is the project for you!

MAKING THE BOARD

Collect all your waste wood and cut it down to the best overall section size. I went for a square section 1 3/4" X 1 3/4", but you can just as well go for 1" X 1" or 1" X 1 1/2", or whatever size best suits your material. And, of course, if **you** want to use a mix of sizes, then no matter, as long as the grain is running along the length and the corners are true at 90°. Having achieved your sawed size, plane the wood down to a smooth finish. When you are happy with the finish, saw it down to 1 1/8" slices. When you have a stockpile of 1 1/8" slices, pencil label the end-grain face, arrange the slices side by side in rows of about 12" long, and spend time working out how best to clamp them together. You can use a couple of G-clamps and a bar clamp, or a jig and wedges; no matter, as long as the arrangement is such that you can apply end pressure without the strips bending or bowing along their length.

Do the gluing-up in two stages: first the blocks side by side **to** make the strips, and then the strips side by side **to** make the slabs. Draw the design of the board on the slab, cut out the profile and sand the end-grain surfaces to a good finish. Fit the whittled feet and the cutting wire, give the whole works a coat of matte varnish and the **project** is finished.

SPECIAL TIP: DRY FIT FIRST

As the success of this project hinges on your being able to glue and clamp dozens of the little blocks together, it is important that you plan out the procedure. The best way is to have a trial dry run, with everything in place

MATERIALS LIST

A Board	1 3/4" X 1 3/4" offcuts—enough to suit the size of your board
B Feet (1)	1 1/2" X 1/2" X 6" 1/2" dowel X 4" long
C Toggle handle (1)	fancy hardwood 1/2" X 1" X 4"

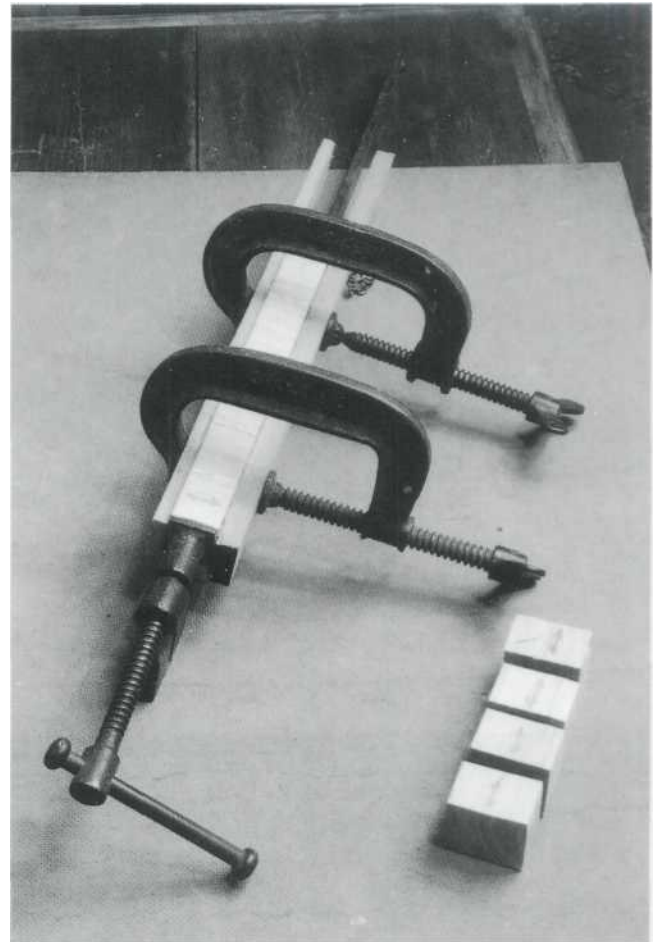
HARDWARE AND EXTRAS

D Cheese wire (1)	15" long
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Note that all measurements allow for a small amount of cutting waste.

except the glue. You need to check out the glue type and make sure that it's suitable, clear an area and make sure that there is room to maneuver, have cloths and newspaper handy, and so on. And then you have to actually clamp-up the wood and see how your arrangement works out. Okay, so maybe my way of working does sound a bit fussy, but the horrible alternative is to have glue smeared all over the place, only to find that the clamp isn't long enough, or you have glued the wrong surfaces, or you are missing some vital piece of equipment.

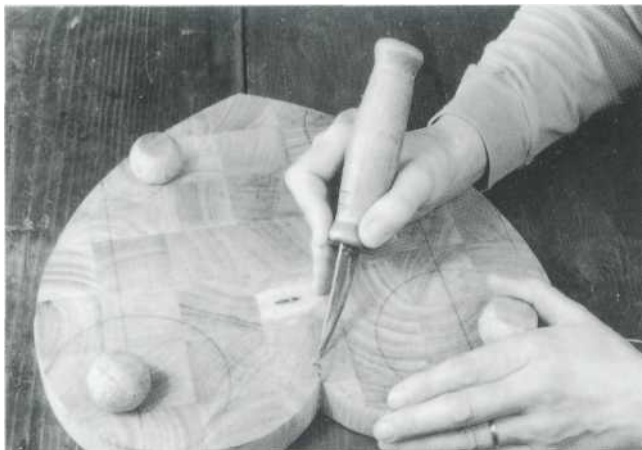
STEP-BY-STEP STAGES



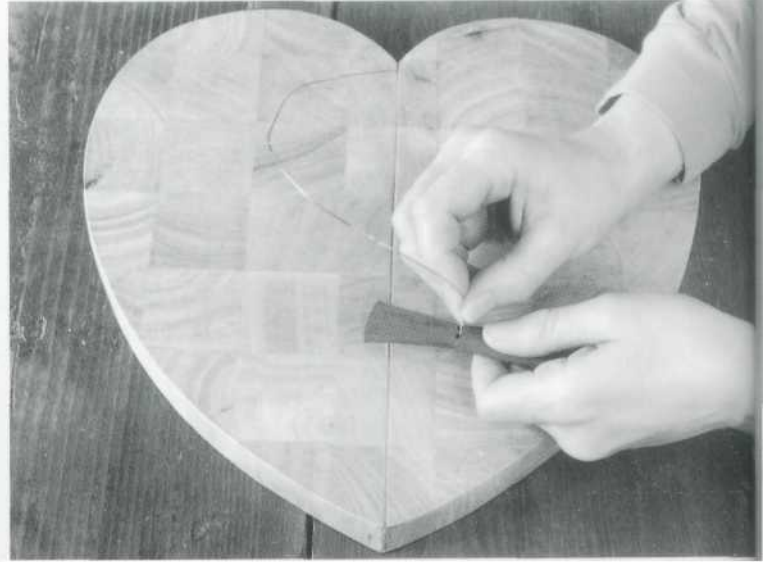
Saw the 1 3/4" X 1 3/4" square section of wood down into 1 1/8" thick slices—like slices off a loaf of bread—and then clamp up. With the arrows indicating the run of the grain, you can see how the slices of wood need to be realigned when it comes to gluing.



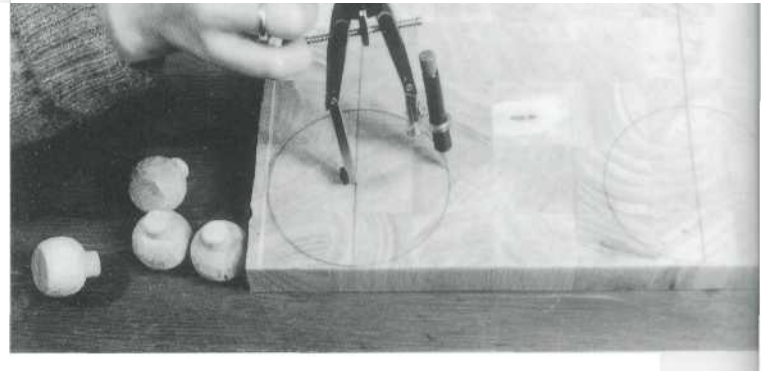
The best way of ensuring that the little ball feet stay in keeping with the total design is to whittle them to shape. I drilled and doweled four little square blocks, cut the corners off the blocks to make rough octagonals, and used a largish sloyd knife for the whittling.



3 To fix the wire, drill a 1/8"-diameter hole, set the wire in the hole and then follow it up with a glued dowel. Make a saw cut between the cheeks, wrap the wire over and around in the cut and follow it up with a glued sliver wedge.



Having whittled a small piece of hardwood to a butterfly shape and sanded it to a super smooth finish run two side-by-side 1/16"-diameter holes through the center of the bow, and knot the wire in place.



And just in case you have an aversion to heart shapes, there is no reason at all why you can't go for just about any shape that takes your fancy. For example, you can simply round the corners of a rectangular board.

DEBRIS COLLECTION AND WOODSHOP SAFETY

Woodshop debris, in the form of offcuts, shavings and sawdust scattered around on the floor and over the surfaces, is a dangerous nuisance. The shavings make the floor slippery and the loose offcuts are potential ankle-breakers. And of course, the wood dust not only clogs the machines, it is a fire risk, it creeps into the home, and it also harms the lungs.

Just how much dust is considered to be dangerous? The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) suggests that if you can see wood dust floating around in the atmosphere when a shaft of sunlight shines across the workshop, then you have a problem that needs solving.

We tackle the problem in several ways: We cut the amount of dust down at the source by using filtered machines and by producing shavings rather than dust, and we have a large mobile vacuum system that we move around to service the various machines. We also wear a rubber dust/vapor mask for most tasks—like sawing, drilling, and when we are using varnish and such—and a full-face electric visor-helmet respirator when we are working at the lathe. As to which mask does the better job, the rubber mask is silent but uncomfortable and sweaty, while the electric full-face respirator is a bit heavy and noisy.

In the context of sawdust being bad for your lungs, I reckon that tried-and-trusted traditional American and European woods like ash, oak, beech, maple, willow, pear and pine are generally much safer than exotic species such as mahogany, obeche and iroko. All that said, if you find yourself sneezing, or your nose is running, or your skin develops a rash, then you best go for another wood type.

So what to do if you are really worried about dust and allergic reactions and such? Well, I think that for safety's sake, you need to stay with the following rules of thumb:

- Whenever possible use hand tool techniques that produce shavings rather than dust.
- Use traditional white-wood species that are non-oily to the touch.
- Use a vacuum machine to suck up the dust as it is produced—before it gets a chance to puff around the workshop.
- Wear a full-face mask, and always wash your hands and lace alter work.
- Always have a thorough sweep-up at the end of the day.
- If you have a health problem, then ask the advice of your doctor.



ELECTRIC VISOR-HELMET RESPIRATOR

*Though the choice of mask does in many ways depend upon your personal preference—they both have **their plus** points—/ usually wear the full-face respirator when I am working at the lathe, for the plain, simple reason that the **full-face** visor offers additional protection from flying debris.*