

# Elegant Coffee Scoops

by Mike Peace • process photos by Bob Aldea



This is a fun project that can be completed by a novice turner with spindle turning ability, but will appeal to woodturners of all skill levels. The completed project is sure to delight the recipient each time he or she handles this scoop. I was inspired to turn these scoops after seeing one of Ruth Niles' custom coffee scoops that belonged to a friend of mine. Ruth is noted for her stainless steel bottle stoppers that she sells on her website ([www.torne-lignum.com](http://www.torne-lignum.com)), but she is also a fine turner as well.

This scoop is designed to be a coffee measure that holds approximately one-eighth of a cup, but could be made a different size for any dry measure scoop by altering the dimensions. I find that a scoop with an inside diameter of about 1-3/8" and a depth of 1-5/8" will hold close to

one-eighth of a cup or two tablespoons.

## WOOD SELECTION

You will discover that there are many design possibilities (see **Fig. 1**). The scoop bowl can be made from a single block of wood, such as the bottom one in the photo, which is made of sweet gum with a cherry handle. Or you can glue up a block with some contrasting woods, such as the middle one made of walnut and Bradford pear. Or you can use the same wood for both the scoop and the handle, such as the one at the top. The block for the scoop should be approximately 2" square by about 3-1/4" long. This is a spindle or "between centers" project, so the grain should run parallel with the lathe bed.

If available, dry wood works best, but I have had

excellent results using scraps cut within the past year or so from green bowl blanks. I keep a supply of small project blocks handy in a box. They have been cut from scraps left over from larger projects (see Fig. 2). Because I start with green wood scraps, the blocks are generally not milled perfectly square and are not necessarily completely dry. But on small projects such as this, where the wall thickness is not that thick, I have not had any serious problems with wood movement or cracking, as long as the blanks have been drying in my shop for at least six months. You will probably have plenty of dry wood available for the handle, because it is cut from a scrap of 3/4" to 7/8" thick flat stock, measuring 6" to 8" long.

## GLUE-UP A BLOCK FOR THE BOWL

I glued-up some contrasting wood for the scoop featured here and will make this scoop from three pieces of wood (see Fig. 3). The top and bottom pieces will be made from red heart and the center section, which will become a raised ring, will be made from wenge, as will the handle.

Select an appropriate-size piece that is free of major cracks or other defects, and cut the ends flush on the table saw. I use a crosscut sled to do this, but a chop saw would also work (see Fig. 4). Minor cracks, such as the ones present in the red heart, can be filled with thin cyanoacrylate glue (CA or superglue) before turning. The pieces will be glued together "end grain to end grain" with yellow glue, so be sure to allow them to dry at least overnight, preferably longer.

## ROUGH-TURN THE BLOCK ROUND

Mark the centers on the block and mount it on the lathe between centers. Since my blanks were not milled perfectly square, I don't bother to use a center finder. Instead, I have found that, with a little practice, you can easily find the center by eye and then mark it with a spring-loaded center punch (see Fig. 5). A small diameter multi-tooth drive center (like a Sorby Stebcenter) would probably work better for small turnings than the typical four-prong spur drive. However, I use a Jet 1/2" drive center for small spindle projects, because that is what I have. Once the block is mounted between centers, use a spindle roughing gouge to rough-turn the block so that it is just round.

I'm in the habit of turning a tenon when using a 4-jawed chuck; therefore, I put a short tenon (about 3/8"



Fig. 1

Here are a few scoops I made that might provide some design options.



Fig. 2

I cut blocks to use for small projects from the scraps of larger bowl blanks.

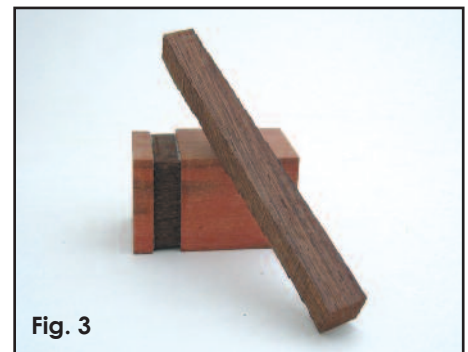


Fig. 3

I'm using red heart and wenge for this scoop.

## SUPPLIES

**Wood:** 2" x 2" x 3-1/4" laminated or solid blank of suitable wood for the scoop bowl; 3/4" to 7/8" square x 6-1/2" piece of wood for the handle

**Tools:** lathe with drive center and 4-jawed chuck; Jacobs chuck; table saw and crosscut sled; 1/4" brad point drill bit; 3/8" twist bit; assorted lathe chisels, including spindle roughing gouge, 3/8" detail spindle gouge, small skew, parting tool, and roundnose scraper; awl or center punch; 1/4" open-end box wrench; fine-tooth saw; craft knife or small chisel

Assorted grits of abrasive paper

Yellow glue and/or cyanoacrylate glue (CA or superglue)

Mylands Friction Polish or finish of choice

Painter's tape

Pencil

Please refer to all manufacturers' labels for proper product usage.

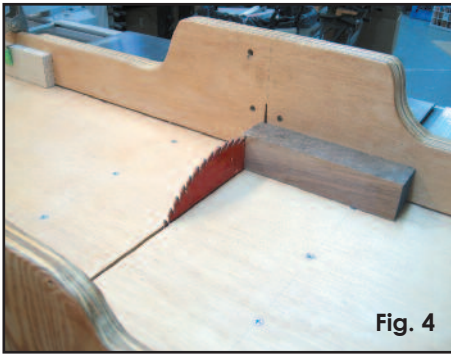


long) on one end with a bedan or parting tool. Make sure the tenon is not so long that it bottoms out in the chuck jaws (see Fig. 6). Be sure to have a clean shoulder when you form the tenon, because it is what provides the strong mechanical hold in the chuck. You don't get that by just grabbing a round piece of wood with the jaws. When the blank is mounted in the chuck, the jaws should fit flush against the shoulder (see Fig. 7).

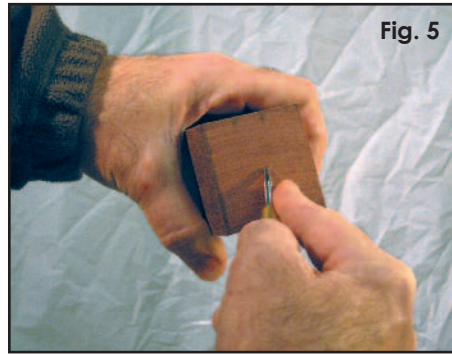
Now that the blank is mounted securely in the chuck, turn it to the final 1-3/4" diameter. Doing so ensures that the blank is large enough to still fit the No. 2 jaws of my Supernova 2 chuck. Some chucks (like the Oneway Talon) will hold a slightly smaller tenon, so you don't have to be as careful to leave the initial diameter large. It is best to check the diameter required by your chuck before starting.

## FINAL SHAPING

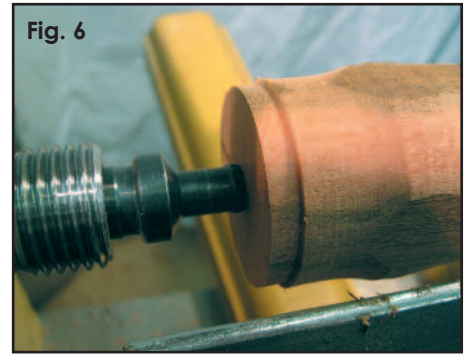
Start shaping the outside by first facing off the mouth to



**A table saw crosscut sled works well for cutting wood for glue-up.**



**Mark the centers using a center punch.**



**Rough-turn the block and form a tenon.**

ensure it is square. I use my 3/8" detail spindle gouge to do this.

Next, start to rough the outside shape by turning a large bead on the centerband of the bowl—this is where the handle will join. This large bead is a nice design feature, but it also provides a wall thick enough to support the handle tenon. I prefer the wall thickness to be just about 1/4" where the handle will mount. For contrast, turn the area above and below the ring to a slightly smaller diameter than the ring itself.

### DRILL FOR THE HANDLE

Mark the spot where the handle hole will be drilled with a center punch and drill it with a 1/4" brad point drill bit (see Fig. 8). This reduces the chances of the bit drifting off the mark. There is no need to go more than about 3/8" deep. This hole can be drilled after hollowing out the bowl, but I find that the hole helps you gauge the wall thickness more easily during hollowing. It also prevents tearout on the inside of the wall, as well as miscalculating the depth and jamming the drill bit into the other wall when you break through!

### FINISH SHAPING AND HOLLOWING

Finish shaping the centerband and further refine the smaller diameters above and below the centerband before starting the hollowing process.

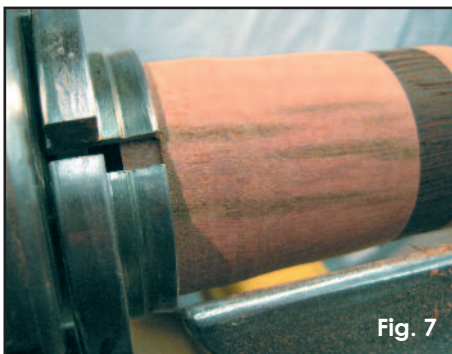
I like to start with a depth drill on most of my hollowing projects, because it makes it easier to know when you get to the right depth. I use a 3/8" twist bit in a Jacobs chuck that is mounted in the tailstock and mark the required depth on the bit with painter's tape (see Fig. 9). You could also use a brad point bit or a Forstner bit; just make sure you include the very tip of the bit in the measurement.

I use a 3/8" detail spindle gouge to do most of the hollowing. Unlike hollowing the typical bowl, you are cutting end grain here; therefore, you must cut from the center to the outside, keeping the flute up and taking light cuts with the left tip (see Fig. 10). Be sure to adjust the tool rest so that the cutting edge is dead center.

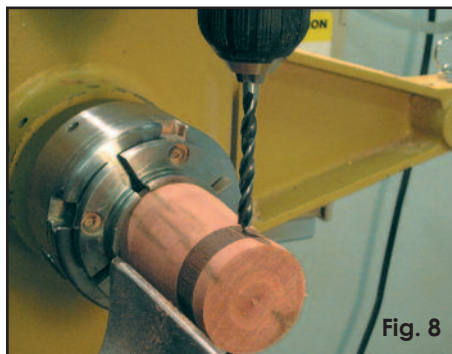
When the cavity is just about hollowed, I switch to a 1/2" roundnose scraper to smooth the walls and the bottom, and to get a consistent wall thickness. Remember that the wall thickness where the hole was drilled should be just at or slightly less than a 1/4"—while the remaining wall should be somewhat less, perhaps 3/16", for the rest of the bowl.

Transfer the inside depth to the outside after hollowing the scoop cavity. I simply measure the inside depth with the spindle gouge and mark the outside with a pencil to locate the inside bottom (see Fig. 11). Then I usually add about 3/16" to define the outside bottom of the scoop.

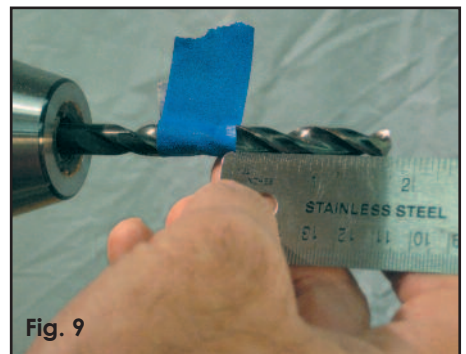
I use a parting tool to cut along the pencil line that was marked in the previous step to indicate where the



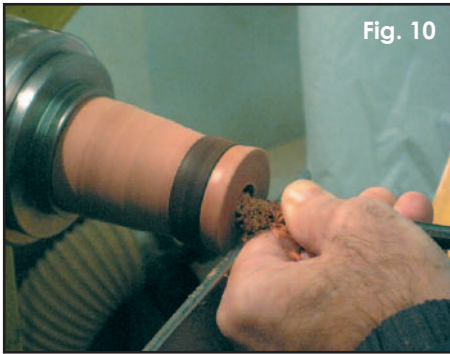
**Put the roughed block tight against the shoulder.**



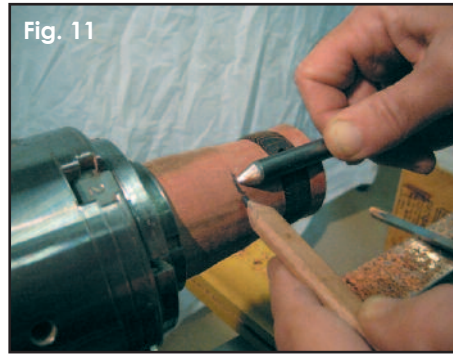
**Drill the handle hole with a hand drill.**



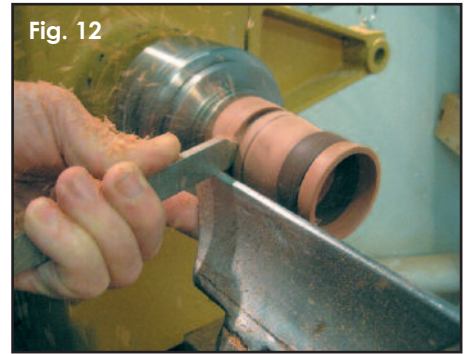
**Use tape on the drill bit to mark the correct depth.**



**Hollow the scoop cavity with a spindle gouge.**



**Measure the inside scoop depth and transfer that measurement to the outside.**



**Mark the bottom with a parting tool.**

outside bottom is (see **Fig. 12**). Do not cut too deep, because there needs to be enough support at the base for final shaping. Finish turning the bottom with the gouge, leaving approximately 1/2" support for final outside sanding (see **Fig. 13**). You don't want to lose the bowl at this point!

### MY "ABRASIVE PROTOCOL"

The inside and outside of the bowl are sanded, starting with 100-grit abrasive and going through all the grits to 320-grit or 400-grit abrasive. After using each grit, I turn off the lathe and sand with the grain to remove any circular scratches.

I use *EEE Ultra Shine* for finishing small projects like this, but that is optional, use whatever finish you prefer. *EEE* comes in a jar, and because only a small amount is used, it seems to last forever. It is basically Tripoli in a wax base and is intended to level the surface finish. It acts as a very fine abrasive, about three times as fine as the last grit used. So if you finish sanding with 400-grit abrasive and then use *EEE*, your project will look as if you sanded to 1200 grit.

After completing the "abrasive protocol," I use *Mylands Friction Polish* on the inside of the scoop. After applying the finish, carefully part it off with a skew or spindle gouge (see **Fig. 14**).

### OPTIONS FOR SANDING THE BOTTOM

Chances are you will still need to do a little more sanding

on the bottom of the scoop bowl. You can make a jam chuck from the remaining waste and mount the bowl on it to finish sanding the bottom (see **Fig. 15**).

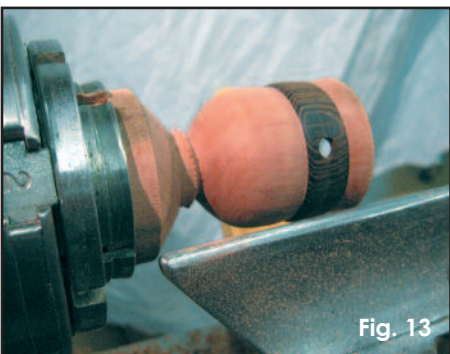
If you prefer to finish the scoop off the lathe (as I often do using *Minwax Antique Oil*), another option is to simply use a sanding mandrel with a sanding disk held in a Jacobs chuck to finish sanding away any tool marks or scratches left on the bottom (see **Fig. 16**).

Sometimes, I use a set of small jaws that makes it even easier for final sanding and even, perhaps, for finishing if you use a friction finish (see **Fig. 17**). Carefully grip the inside of the bowl with the jaws in the expansion mode, making sure not to apply too much pressure to crack the wood.

### TURN THE HANDLE

Now, let's turn a well-proportioned handle to match. Find the center of both ends of the blank, center punch, and mount between centers. Rough-turn the blank round with a spindle roughing gouge.

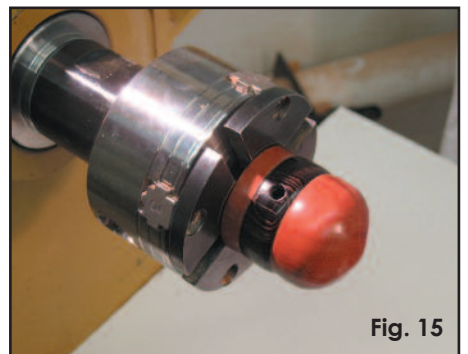
Start by roughing out the handle tenon with a parting tool, but don't worry about turning it down to finished size yet. I leave at least a 1/4" of waste to the right of the tenon at the tailstock end that allows me to turn away any hole left by the live center (see **Fig. 18**). Begin to shape the handle, working from the tailstock end to the headstock, adding whatever bead or cove design elements you wish.



**Shape the scoop bottom, leaving enough support for sanding.**



**Carefully part off the scoop bowl with a skew.**



**A jam chuck is a good way to hold the bottom for final finishing.**



**Fig. 16**  
A sanding mandrel with sanding disks can also be used to finish off the bottom.



**Fig. 17**  
If you have a set of small jaws, use them for finishing off the bottom.



**Fig. 18**  
Leave room next to the handle tenon so that you can remove the hole left by the live center.

From a design perspective, I would suggest that you keep the largest diameter near the end of the handle and taper the handle back to the tenon.

Once the handle is turned, I use my "abrasive protocol" again, following up with EEE. The friction polish is used now, so if I get some on the handle tenon, it can still be trimmed away when the tenon is sized to match the 1/4" hole drilled in the bowl. This ensures a good glue bond.

A 1/4" open-end wrench is used to size the tenon exactly. Using a parting tool, reduce the tenon size and carefully trim it down to 1/4", testing frequently with the wrench (see **Fig. 19**). Carefully support the handle with your left hand and part it off using a skew (see **Fig. 20**).

Once the tenon is sized, measure the final wall thickness of the bowl where the hole was drilled, because you want to make the tenon length match the wall thickness.

I use a fine-tooth saw (like the Japanese flush cut saw shown in **Fig. 21**) to trim off the handle tenon. Carefully measuring the wall thickness at the hole minimizes the need for cleanup inside the scoop after gluing on the handle—other than perhaps some minor sanding.

## ASSEMBLE AND FINISH

Dry-fit the handle into the bowl. If you are satisfied with the fit, glue on the handle. I prefer to use yellow glue, but

medium cyanoacrylate glue or epoxy can be used if you prefer. After the glue has dried, check where the tenon comes through the wall. If it protrudes too much, trim carefully with a craft knife or a small chisel. However, if the fit is very close, I simply sand it smooth.

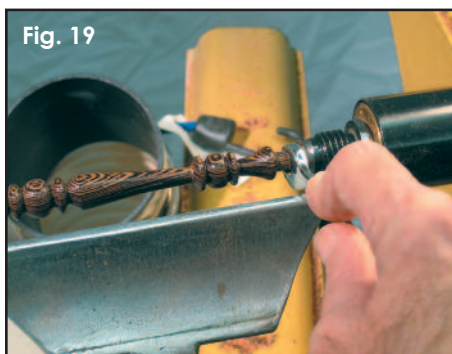
## Mike Peace

Mike Peace is a retired software projects manager and a retired Lieutenant Colonel in the US Army Reserve. He started turning several years ago and enjoys making a wide variety of items, from ornaments to hollowforms.



Mike is a member of the AAW and is active in three separate woodturning chapters in the Atlanta area, serving as secretary and newsletter editor of one. He also enjoys teaching turning and demonstrating.

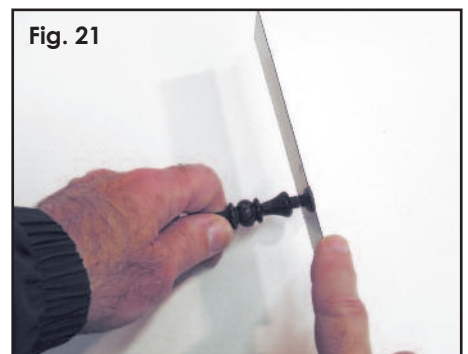
Mike welcomes your questions and comments, and can be reached by e-mail at [mtpeace@bellsouth.net](mailto:mtpeace@bellsouth.net). You can see photos of his work in the Member Galleries on the AAW website ([www.aawforum.org/photopost/showmembers.php?cat=500](http://www.aawforum.org/photopost/showmembers.php?cat=500)).



**Fig. 19**  
Use a 1/4" open-end box wrench to accurately size the tenon.



**Fig. 20**  
Using a skew, carefully part off the scoop handle.



**Fig. 21**  
A Japanese flush cut saw is a good way to cut the tenon to length.

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