

Celtic Love Spoon

This traditional token of affection can be made with a few carving tools, and it definitely will give your carving skills a weekend workout.

Start with a piece of $\frac{3}{4}$ " mahogany and cut it to $9\frac{1}{2}$ " long by $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide. Our design includes a heart at the top, a Celtic cross in the middle and a knot near the base. Photocopy the design and put the original aside. You can use the full-size pattern in the PullOut™ Plans or the slightly smaller version at right.

Cut out the outside edges of the paper pattern and glue it to the mahogany blank with spray adhesive. Next, chuck a $\frac{1}{16}$ " bit into your drill press. Pierce holes on the corners of the patterns to make room for the saw blade that will cut out the waste. Use a larger bit to drill out the pattern around the center of the cross because this part is too tight for a saw. Then use a scroll saw or coping saw to remove the wood from the interior of the pattern throughout the spoon.

Now use your band saw to cut the piece of wood along its thickness. This will give you two identical, but thinner, blanks to carve. Then cut the outside edge of the handle of the spoon. Don't cut out the spoon part yet; this will give your workpiece strength while carving.

Now outline the pattern with a V-tool. Remove the paper pattern from the wood.

When making your cuts, pay attention to the different depths of carving in the spoon. Most of the curvy loops are merely rounded over. The cross, however, has two different levels. The rectangular interior of the arms is $\frac{1}{16}$ " deep with a v-shaped trench at the bottom. The area between the cross and heart is $\frac{1}{8}$ " deep.

To carve out the interiors, make a vertical stop cut with a skew or knife that is the depth of the hollow area. Once the outline has been clearly defined, you can start boasting the foreground by removing the waste with a deep gouge. Then smooth the surface

with a shallow sweep.

A straight-edged knife can be used for rounding the loops. Be sure to cut with the grain or directly perpendicular to the grain to avoid tear out. The deeper cuts where the loops intersect can be shaped with stop cuts and a gouge. Then round over the edges with a straight knife.

The narrow trenches that frame the knot and cross (see photo at left) can be cut with a small gouge that has a tight sweep.

Use a gouge or a curved shank to hollow the spoon area. Then cut out the exterior edge of the spoon with a band saw.

Use sandpaper taped to popsicle sticks or emery boards to sand the rough edges. Finish with oil or a clear finish.

Now all that's left is finding a sweetheart worthy of all this work.

—Jim Stuard, PW staff

You Don't Eat With Them

The giving of Celtic love spoons is a tradition common since the 17th century. The spoons, which are always made from one piece of wood, were hand carved for a loved one. The carver would put different symbols into the handle of the spoon to mean different things. Hearts represented love; keys symbolized home and security; ships stood for smooth passage through life; wheels represented work; crosses meant faith; and knots symbolized an everlasting bond. Sometimes a chain would be carved from the single piece of wood, which stood for either the linking of lives or a certain number of children.

Love spoons are still around, though many people purchase them instead of carving them by hand. While this spoon can be made for a few dollars, hand-carved spoons cost between \$10 for a simple, small spoon to \$115 for a large intricate spoon.

Diagram

