

# Christmas Bell Ornament



This is an easy Christmas ornament idea I cabbaged from a friend and skilled turner, Curt Fuller, from Utah. I kind of adapted it to my style but I still got the idea from him.

This is another simple design incorporating a simple laminated board. In the photo below you can see my strips of wood laid out ready for gluing. I have a strip of maple, bloodwood, and walnut along with a few contrasting veneers.

This technique is used by me on several of my simple projects so you may have seen this many times before.



Below are the boards being glued together with Titebond original and a roller applicator bottle to help get an even spread of glue. Actually these aren't the exact boards used for this project but the technique is the same. The dimensions of the laminated board I used was about  $2\frac{1}{4}$ " tall x  $1\frac{1}{2}$ " thick and about 28" long. This yielded a  $2\frac{7}{8}$ " diameter bell about 2" tall. That gives me a nice size ornament.



I use several clamps to keep everything tight till dry.



Afterward the laminated board is run thru my jointer and then my table saw to true up the surfaces.

My next step is to chop the board into wedges on the miter saw set at 45 degrees.





I cut 8 pieces from the board, every other piece is  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a complete bell. Using this technique, I get two ornaments from the same board, with different designs.



Above are corresponding wedges gathered together to form the bell.

Looking back now I should have put the walnut/bloodwood strips closer to the middle of the lamination so they would show off better in the end product, but this will work and you'll get the picture as we go on.

After cutting all the pieces I take them to the sander. All you need to do is smooth one side-it doesn't even have to be at exactly 90 degrees, we just need two smooth mated sides, ready for gluing.



In the photo below you can see I've glued up two of the quarters into one half a block design. At this step you should make sure that both sides of the segments line up-that is, if you line up the veneers on one side, flip it over to make sure they line up on the other side as well-don't take it for granted that everything is perfectly square. I don't clamp these pieces-if they are sanded flush they should glue very well with just hand pressure. Rub the two pieces together to get the excess glue squeezed out, align the veneers, hold tight together for about 20 seconds and let them sit.



The next step is to sand the new long edge flat and then glue the two halves together to form a complete block. I forgot to take a photo of sanding the two halves, but I hope you can figure that out from the photo below.

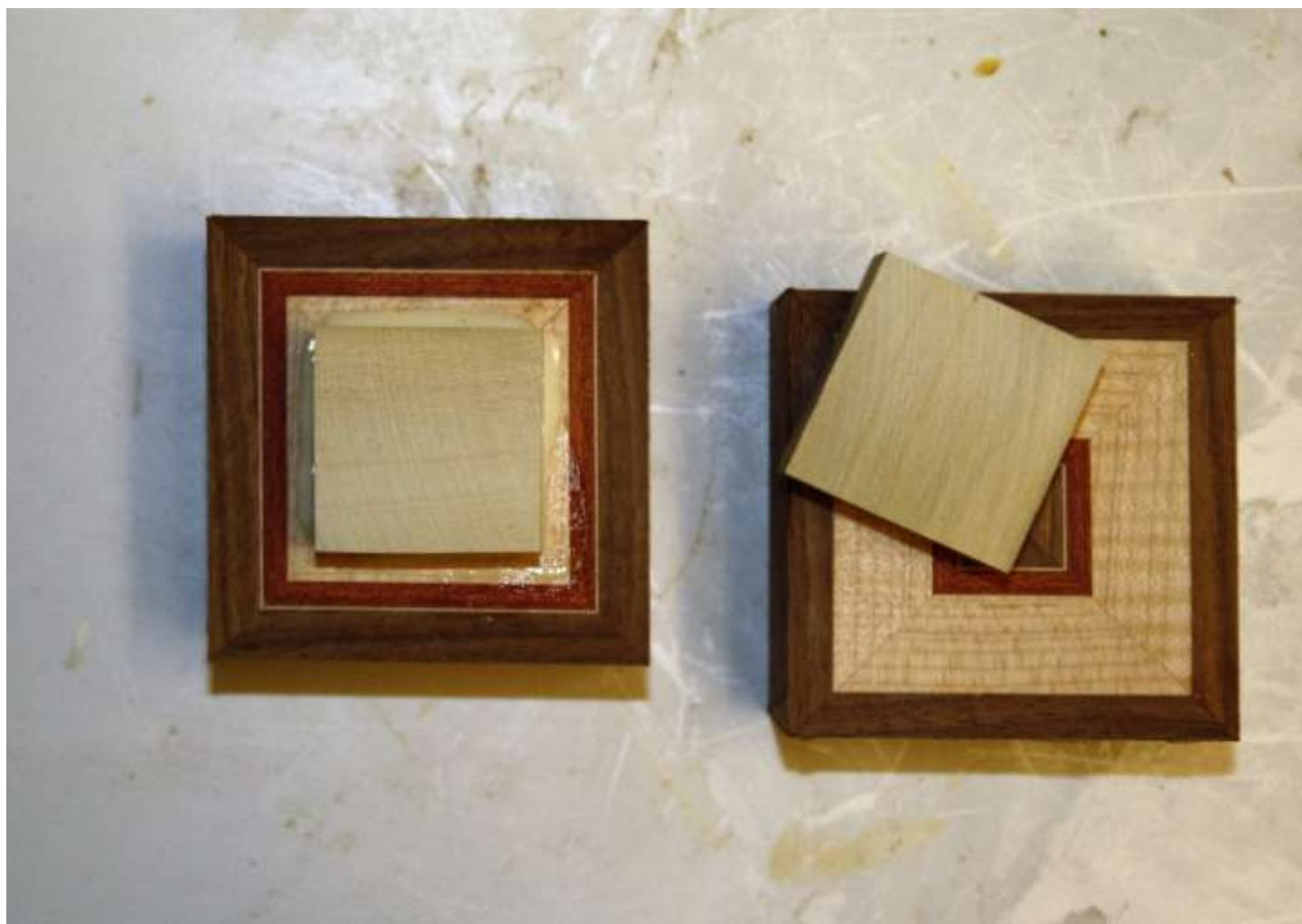
Here are the two halves glued together. Once again, align both sides of the pieces to get closest match. This photo shows both of the block designs cut from the same laminated board. Remember-every other cut wedge will make up one block.





Now that the blocks are finished, I glue a scrap square piece of wood to the bad side (the one that lined up the worst, if any, when glued). This will be the top of the bell.

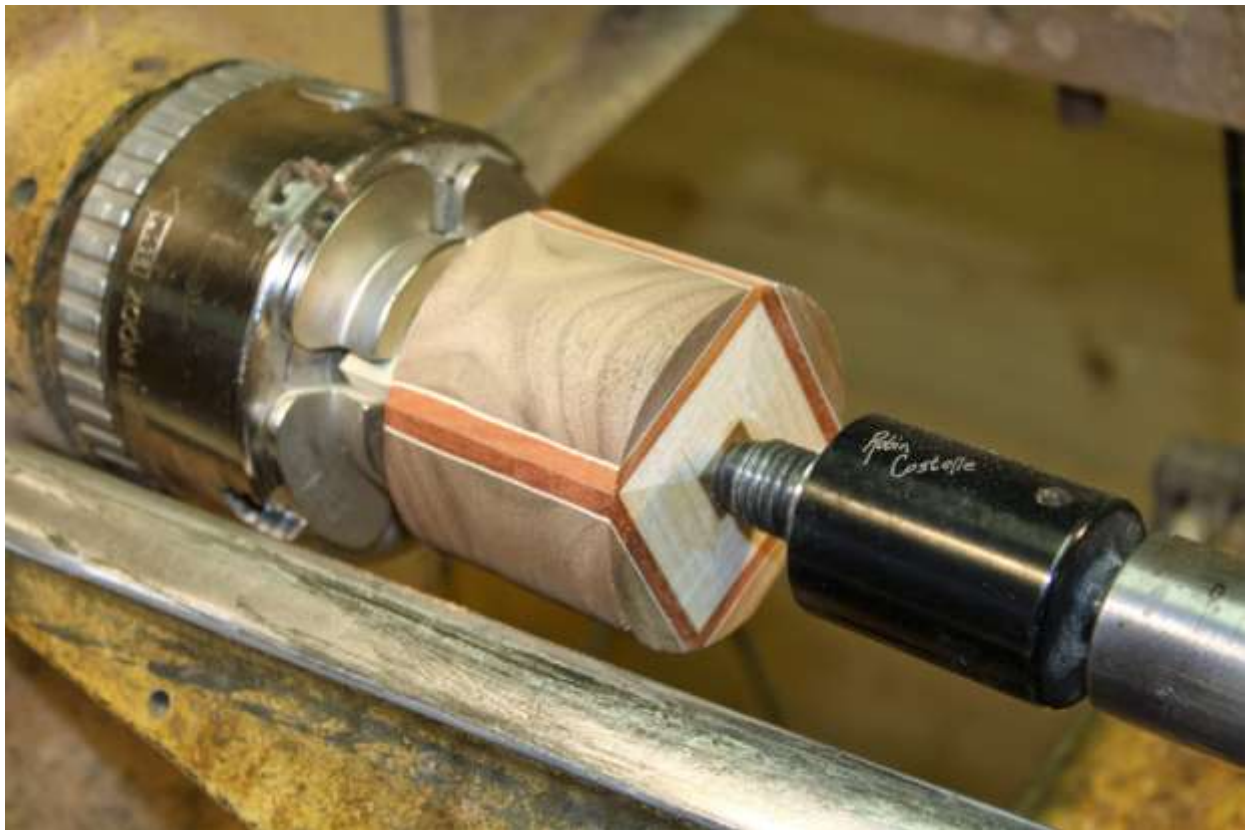
The scrap squares of wood should be both, small enough to fit into the jaws of your chuck, and perfectly square! The corners of these blocks will line up with the segment joints of the design. This ensures that the block and the ornament are exactly centered in the jaws. You can tell my scrap pieces are square and true on all sides and the corners are aligned with the joints of the design on the left (or as near as possible, remember-it's only an ornament- Don't get too caught up with it).





Here is one completed bell design chucked up and ready to turn.

First step is truing the outside. Don't just plow into the wood. You are cutting a lot of unsupported endgrain (yes, endgrain-on all four segments), on very dry wood. It can sometimes splinter and take a big piece out of the block.







I like to go slow and just kinda open this thing up to see what the design has to offer. I can sometimes get in a hurry and take too much off, only to find that the outcome may have been better if turned differently. In the photo above you can see the design coming out, but if I were to take much more off the bottom half, I would lose much of this.



At this point, before I get the top of the bell turned too thin, I start hollowing.



I typically use my favorite tool for almost all of this project- a  $\frac{1}{2}$ " detail spindle gouge. I can hollow and use it to cut very cleanly inside since this piece is kind of open and easily accessible. I will use a small round scraper or Easy Wood tool on the inside top to complete the curvature. I think  $\frac{1}{4}$ " wall thickness seems a bit heavy and  $\frac{1}{8}$ " a bit light. I try for  $\frac{3}{16}$ " and really do think it makes difference, but like I said before-it's only an ornament and most people will be so enamored by your wonderful skill and artistic abilities that they probably won't notice.

Once the inside is finished I can take more off the outside to nearly complete the top profile. If I get the top the way I want and need more off the inside top I still have a good enough piece holding everything together and can take a few more light cuts inside.



Here I'm using the detail gouge again on the outside. Light cuts with a sharp tool will give me a good surface with no tear out. This is also a good time to completely sand the inside and the bottom half of the outside. You can even sign the inside if you want. I would prefer a signed piece even if I didn't know the artist.





The next step for me is to reverse the bell in the chuck in order to finish the top.



For this I've got several pieces of PVC pipe cut to insert around the bell (or lid or little bowl or whatever). These were cut from a short piece of pipe-squared-and then a slot cut out on the bandsaw to make them adjustable. These will keep enough pressure to help hold the piece and not mar the edges. I only need light cuts or sanding to finish the top.



Here you can see I've parted off the waste block. I started with a parting tool and then finished up with a Japanese pull saw to make sure nothing exciting happens.



ON this piece I can just power sand the top smooth starting with 150 or so and running thru. I will usually go to 400 grit or maybe even 600. Just so long as I can't see any scratches. Below I've finished the top and started to drill a 1/4 " hole for the handle.

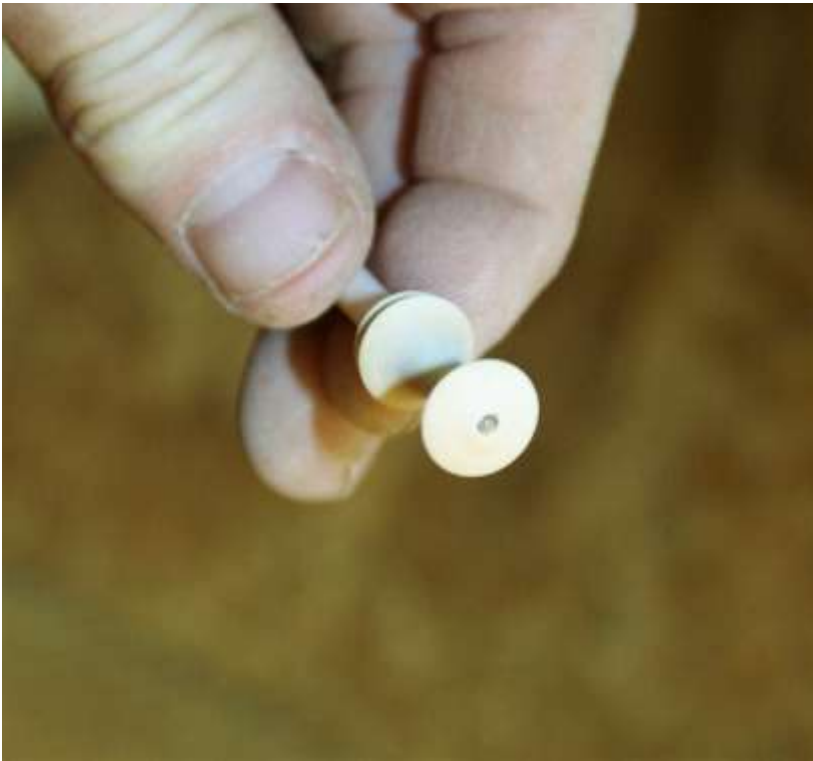


Handles are another personal touch. I've kinda set on a design and it works ok. I'll probably change it up some on different bells. I like a thin spindle but I have to remember that this is a handle, not a finial. I like a cove near the top to form a purchase for your finger tips, but also a thicker portion lower to grip for a good ringing. Either way-nice crisp features will top your bell off elegantly. I turn a ¼" tenon to stick into the top of the bell and glue everything with thick CA glue or Titebond.



The dimple left by the live center will help me line up a 1/16" drill bit for an eyelet on the top of the handle. On the bottom, I just eyeball and drill a hole in the center best as I can, to accept a ringing metal bell (shown below).





Top of handle.



Bottom of handle.

Now I just glue the handle into place. In one of the photos below you can see the hole inside for the attachment of the metal bell.



I just use a short piece of telephone wire, twisted into a loop, to make an eyelet. It's effective and I have lots of wire around (but my phone sometimes doesn't work right?)



Here is the little bell, also with a piece of wrapped wire to be inserted inside the bell. I need a pair of needle nose pliers reach in there and glue it in place.





Well that just about does it for this project. A nice little ornament or gift, endless variations of designs, and a good project to work on with some segmenting, spindle work and add ons. Hope you enjoy this and thanks again to Curt Fuller for allowing me to copy his design.



Remember to always use safe work practices and protective equipment when woodworking.

Take care and thanks for looking-Robin