Turning an Hors d’Oeuvre Tray – A Shallow Rectangular Bowl
by Steven McLoon

- Prepare 1” x 5½” x 7½” stock; kiln dried wood is best since it is less likely to change shape after turning; the size is not critical other than a “set” of trays looks best if all are the same size.

  [If the wood is very dry or prone to chipping, then it helps to glue runners of scrap wood onto both long grain edges, which should be cut off and sanded after turning.]

- Finish sand all four edges to 400g.
- Mark the center on what will be the top face.
- Drill a ¾” diameter hole ½” deep in the center of the top face; do not use a drill bit with a guide point.
- Mount the stock onto a woodworm screw in a four-jaw chuck; use a shim if the screw protrudes more than ½” from the chuck; screw the stock on tightly so that it is flush against the chuck jaws or the shim on all sides.

  -or-

  If you do not have a woodworm screw, then mount the top face centered onto a flat wood face plate with double-stick tape; use a center hole in the face plate and a piece of hanger-wire to center the stock; press the stock tightly onto the tape with force (vice or tailstock); position the tailstock to support the work when possible.

- With the lathe running at its slowest speed, mark the center on the bottom face with a pencil; with the lathe stopped, make a pencil mark 1½” and 1¾” from the center point; with the lathe running draw a complete circle at each mark.

- Turn the base to a depth of ¼” on either sides of the drawn circles on the back face with a bowl gouge; go slightly deeper on the outside of the base.

- Resurface the base as required using a bowl gouge making sure it is flat; recheck the depth on either side of the base.

- Turn the back face of the tray to its final shape with a bowl gouge; cut from the center to the corners; turn until the thickness at the corners is about ¼”; shear-scrape to clean up the surface.
• Turn away the center of the base to a consistent depth of ⅛" with a bowl gouge; square or dovetail the inside corner of the base as appropriate for the chuck jaws using a bedan, parting tool, small scraper or skew.

• Sand the back side of the tray to 400g.

• Remove the tray from the woodworm screw; determine the thickness available to turn away near the center (e.g. remaining thickness near the center less a ~⅛").

• Mount the tray in the chuck using the inside surface of the base; do not use too much force on the jaws or the wall of the base will break. (Best to use non-marring jaws.)

• Turn the top face of the tray to a continuous thickness going from the original height of the corners to the center using a bowl gouge; an ⅛" is a nice final thickness; rough turn first, then go to final thickness in steps starting near the corners; stay away from the very corners; use sanding to get to the final thickness at the corners.

• Sand the top face of the tray to 400g.

• Remove the tray from the chuck; raise the grain with water; allow to dry completely; it is best to raise the grain and dry it a second time; sand from 220g to 2000g by hand; wipe away dust with a microfiber towel.

• Wipe on walnut oil; keep wet with oil for 15 minutes; wipe off excess oil; allow to dry overnight; reapply oil at least two more times.

• If desired after the oil has dried (~2 weeks), the tray can be buffed using the three-step Beall system.

• If desired, the tray can be waxed to protect the finish.

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