



Freehand ripping a board in half following a chalk line

Learning wood machining skills

In the next part of his new series, **Peter Sefton** and his Long Course students mix up the use of machines and hand tools to make a small rack

Mixing up the use of machines and hand tools has always been a crucial part of my students' time with us at the School. This small rack was their first project to start learning wood machining skills; preparing timber for their individual projects.

General design brief

The students were given a general design brief for a rack incorporating hand-cut through and lapped dovetails, wedged mortise & tenons and dovetail housings - all good joints in themselves, but all reliant on accurate timber preparation and choice.

Waney-edged English ash boards were taken from the timber store where they have been settling since I bought them four years ago; I sourced the boards from a local farmer after he had planked and air-dried them. The boards were full of character - in other words, knots, splits, sap and a few worm holes for good measure!

Waney-edge boards

Finding the components for a given project from waney-edge boards can be quite tricky - knowing what is going to be stunning and what is kindle is a key skill when evaluating timber. I feel that having this skill is one of the defining factors between being a good

woodworker and a great furniture maker.

The students referenced their drawings and cutting lists and needed to select all the timber from a single board to keep colour and grain consistency. Choosing the timber at this early stage can make or break a project - we were looking to match the grain left and right, choose timber that the joints would work within plus find some interesting grain to lift the project.

Interlocked grain

We found some fantastic swirling crotch grain that we knew would look great within the rack. This interlocked grain can be challenging to use without breaking up when being machined - we knew we were in with a good chance of it not breaking up as we had just changed over the planer's cutters, so we were quite prepared to take it slowly through the machine and if this didn't work, we would revert to our dual drum sander. The timber was carefully machined and left to relax for a week before being re-machined prior to the hand joints being formed.

The racks are now complete and the grain's natural beauty has been highlighted within the back rails and detailing within the project; it's great to see those rough-sawn boards come to life. **GW**



Great use of the grain in Ian's chilli spice rack



Students reading the grain and marking out boards



Boards after ripping marked up with student's initials on the ends



Ian ripping boards to width on the table saw



Deeping is often safer on the bandsaw, using a gripper to hold timber against the fence



A pair of through dovetails with the cathedral grain rising from the joint



A pair of left- and right-hand rack sides with dovetail housings and matched grain



Simon's finished rack with the grain on the sides following the curved front edge