The Artistic Lazy Susan

Introduction & Thoughts on Design

I take great care in choosing figured woods or woods with an interesting grain pattern for my Lazy Susans. I spend a great deal of time lining up the grain patterns for the glued tops so that it is difficult to see the individual boards that make up the top. This is accomplished by choosing a board that has a grain pattern that can be easily matched. Be aware of grain direction and the way light is reflected off the surface of the Boards. If the grain of the boards is going in the opposite direction, the boards will stand out as separate boards, thus negating all the time and effort that was spent matching the grain pattern. I tend to slowly nip away at the edges of the boards to better blend the grain. I also watch for patterns in the wood that can either fool the eye or that may make a pleasing picture of balance and color. I also add a groove under the edge of the top for your fingers. I sometimes turn a groove or a bead in the tops to show that it was turned on a lathe and not just cut out on a band saw. Experiment and have fun.

Tools and Materials

3/8” Bowl Gouge Traditional Grind
3/8” Side Ground Bowl Gouge
Round Nose Scraper
3 Point Tool ¼”
3/8” Detail Spindle Gouge
1/16” or smaller Pilot Hole Drill Bit (self centering drill recommended)
5/8” Drill bit Fisch Brad point Bit or Forstner Bit
5 plus Board Feet of Interesting wood 3/4” to 1 3/8” thick
6” Lazy Susan Bracket (I now prefer to use a 9” circular Lazy Susan Bracket)
Screws for Bracket
#10 or #20 Biscuits (optional)

Procedure

1. The most important step is the selection of the wood to turn the Lazy Susan. Try to select a wood that has figure that can be matched or blended on the edges. I strive to make the joints invisible as though the top is made from one board and not glued up from several boards.

2. As I look at the board I make the initial decision as to where to cut the board for ease of handling and machining. I then cut it into more manageable lengths, guessing at where the best grain match will be. At first this may seem difficult, but with practice your eye will begin to see patterns and it will become easier every time you do it.

3. If you have a jointer available, run the boards through on one face side to flatten them out. At this time I also joint at least one edge of the boards.
    a. If you are working with wide boards they may have to be ripped on the table saw to fit the jointer. Take care to rip them at a point that will be easy to match the grain when they are glued back together.
    b. If a jointer is not available you can skip this step and go straight to the planer.

    c. If you do not have access to a planer or jointer, be sure to buy your boards already planed and jointed.

4. Now run the boards through the planer with the jointed side down.

5. On a clean flat table begin laying out the boards for final matching. As I match the boards, I cut them to length plus approximately ½" plus or minus.
    d. I arrange the boards with the cupped side down. I do not alter the cup side as is recommended for some table top glue ups, as the grain from one side of the board reflects light differently than from the other side. The altering of the cup also produces a wave pattern in the top, as one board cups up and then the next board cups down.
    e. I sometimes break this rule, as my ultimate goal is for a nice looking top. Therefore, I sometimes just place the best side up.
    f. To better match the cut lines and blend those in, I sometimes overlap the boards, to help visualize where to rip them, for the best grain match.

6. To insure a nice even joint when using the table saw the following suggestions will help:
    g. Use a good quality saw blade. (Forester II, Freud's new Ultimate rip saw Blade etc.)

h. Tune and square up your saw, blade and rip fence.
i. Rip the board on the right side of the joint face up and the board on the left side of the joint face down. This insures that any inaccuracies, in the angle of the cut, are offset by altering the cut.

7. It is best to use a jointer for joining the boards. But I have found that when using highly figured woods, that the irregular grain sometimes causes chip out and therefore a lousy joint. So with highly figured woods I opt for the table saw method.

8. Once I have matched the boards I draw the top of a triangle across the boards to aid in remembering their proper placement.

Note: biscuits are not necessary for a good glue u. If the joint is well made the glue itself will be more than strong enough to hold the boards together. I find that they help to keep the boards lined up during the clamping process.

9. We are now ready to mark for the biscuits that will help to line up the joint and reinforce it during glue up.

a. First it is best to draw the final diameter of the lazy susan with a compass or a cardboard pattern. It is very important to know where the outside edges of the lazy susan are so that the biscuits are not placed where they will become exposed when the piece is turned.
b. We also have to take into consideration any detail work or grooves that we might turn into the piece.
c. Remember to leave extra room around the biscuits as their placement is not critical to the strength of the lazy susan. They are mainly used, as an aid during glue up to help keep the top surfaces aligned properly.

10. Using a biscuit jointer, cut the slots for the biscuits. (I use # 10 or #20 biscuits)

Note: I have read in some woodworking magazines, that biscuits have a tendency to telescope through to the surface due to the swelling of the biscuit and the added moisture. I have not had a problem with this, perhaps due to the fact that I glue my blanks up a week or two before I turn and sand my Lazy Susans

11. Now it is time to glue up the lazy susan.

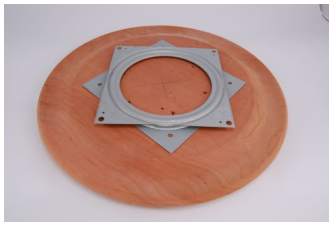
d. I like to use the Original Titebond Carpenters Glue. I have found that Gorilla glue (polyurethane) is too time consuming and messy.
e. I let the glue set for 1 to 2 hours before pealing off the excess glue. Using a paint scraper or a cabinet chisel I carefully remove the semi hardened glue.
f. I have found that if I wipe the excess glue off when it is wet, that it tends to get pushed into the grain of the wood, which shows up later in the finishing process as a discoloration in the finish.

12. Unclamp the piece.

13. I generally belt sand the top and bottom now to level them out and clean up the glue joints. I like to do it now, while they are still square, as it is much easier now than when they are round.

14. The next step is to draw a circle on the backside for the faceplate and drill the pilot holes for the screws. I like to use the largest faceplate that will fit so as to minimize any wobble when turning.

15. Now is a good time to mark and drill the pilot holes for the Lazy Susan hardware screws. Take note that there is a top and bottom to the hardware, as the holes in the bracket are placed differently.



16. Next I take the blank to the band saw and cut it into a circle.

17. Mount it on the lathe and true it up or turn it to finished diameter. I generally do not face off the front as I have found that this creates extra sanding and work. I have found that it is quicker and easier to machine sand the top & back off the lathe.

18. Now is the time to do any detail work on the surface and the edges.

19. Remove top from lathe and set aside until bottom has been turned.

20. The Bottom needs to be at least 10 1/2” to 11” in diameter to accommodate the 6” lazy Susan bracket. The diameter increases as the size of the tops increase in diameter. For instance the diameter of the base is approximately 14” for a 17” to 18” lazy Susan. Mark the holes for the faceplate and the lazy susan bracket remembering that there is a top and bottom to the bracket and drill the pilot holes for both. If you have not already done so in step 15.

21. Mount the Bottom in the lathe and turn it to finished diameter and add any detailing. I generally sand the bottom while it is still in the lathe as I have usually turned some detail that needs sanding on the lathe.

22. Remove the bottom from the lathe.

23. It is now time to mark the access hole in the bottom for final mounting of the hardware. To do this I use a small 1/16” diameter. Drill bit to drill a pilot hole through the bottom to locate the proper placement for the 5/8” access hole. I temporally place the bracket on the bottom and rotate the part of the bracket that mounts to the top 45 degrees to the bottom mounting plate. I then mark the screw hole and drill the pilot hole so that I will be able to access the screw when it is time to mount the bracket.

24. Now I turn the base over and using a 5/8” brad point bit or forstner bit, I drill through the bottom. I have a scrap board underneath the base to minimize tear-out as the drill bit breaks through the work.

25. I now finish sand everything, sign my work and put the first coat of Watco Danish oil on all the parts both top and bottom. That is if the wood is a dark wood the Danish Oil brings out the color, if it is a lighter wood I skip the oil and apply the final finish.

26. Once the finish has had time to dry, I mount the hardware to the bottom first and then to the top through the access hole. Remember there is a top and bottom to the hardware.

27. I then turn a dowel from contrasting wood to fill the access hole and glue it in place.

28. I finish Lazy Susan by sanding the dowel smooth and adding a final coat of finish. I sometimes use wipe on polyurethane or Lacquer for a final finish.

29. The last step is to admire your work for its beauty and functionality.