

Knife Block

One piece of wood and a lot of bamboo skewers do the trick.

When we build an “I Can Do That” project we buy all the materials from a home center. For this project, however, I also had to stop at the grocery store on the way back to the shop.

That’s because this knife block holds all your cutlery in an array of bamboo skewers – the kind you use for kabobs. Though you’re not going to believe me, you need more than 1,000 $\frac{1}{8}$ "-diameter skewers to do the job. Good thing skewers are cheap – about \$1.80 for 100.

In addition to cleaning out your supermarket of bamboo skewers, you’re going to need some $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick wood. You need about 4' of a board that’s about 10" wide. I lucked out. Our Lowe’s happened to have one piece of $\frac{1}{2}$ "-thick quartersawn red oak.

Begin by crosscutting your parts to length with your miter saw and ripping them to width with your jigsaw. The next step is to cut the finger joints with the jigsaw.

Jigsaw Joinery

A jigsaw that’s fitted with a quality blade (such as the Bosch T308B Xtra-clean blades) can make cuts that require only a little tweaking with a chisel. The trick is to work against a fence.

First you need to figure out the exact distance from the edge of your jigsaw’s shoe to one side of the blade. I made a test cut in some scrap to figure this out. Your blade might not be exactly centered so you’ll want to check against the left and the right sides of the jigsaw’s shoe.

Lay out all the cuts on the side pieces using the construction drawing. Then make the short $\frac{5}{8}$ "-long rip cuts that define all the fingers on the side pieces.

To remove the waste between the fingers, clamp a straight piece of scrap to your work-



Flexible protection. This simple knife block allows you to store any size knife.

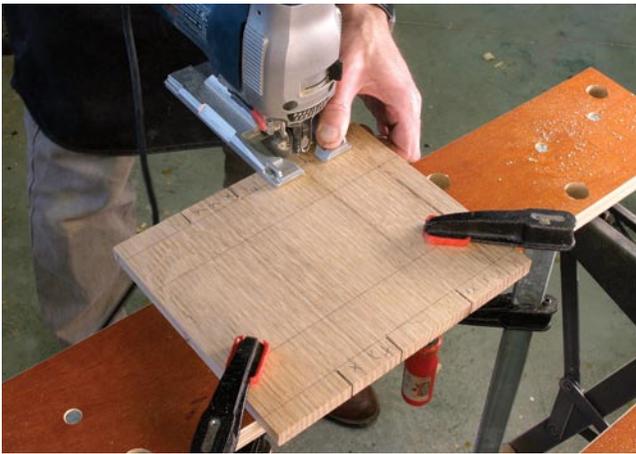
piece that will act as a fence for the shoe of the jigsaw. This fence will guide the jigsaw to make a straight cut as you saw out the waste. First remove the waste from the ends.

To cut the waste from between two fingers you’ll have to make several cuts. Break up the waste with short cuts, then swoop in with the saw. A couple swoops and you can maneuver your jigsaw’s shoe against the fence to make your finished cut. If you take off too much your blade can deflect.

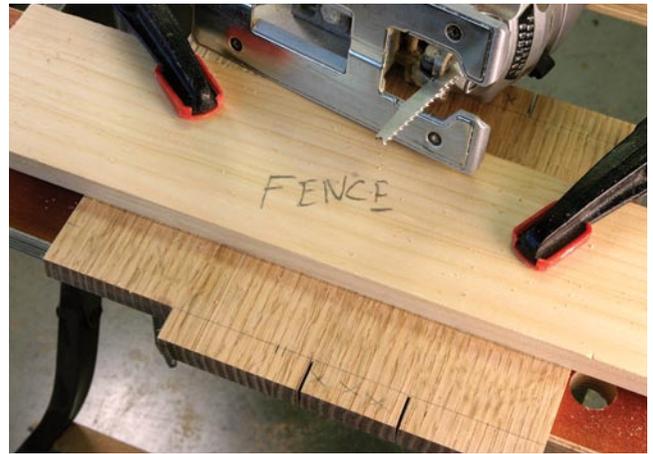
Transfer the Shape

Now use the shape of the side pieces to mark the complementary shape on the ends. See the photo at right for details. Mark the waste then remove it from the ends using the same techniques (and the same fence) you used to cut the sides.

Now clean up the joints with a sharp chisel until the sides and ends fit together snugly. Sand your pieces and ease all the edges of the finger joints with sandpaper.



Short cuts first. Define the fingers of the joints with these short rips.



Set the fence. With the fence in place remove the easy bits from the ends.

Assembly

To glue the sides and ends together, apply yellow glue to the mating surfaces and clamp things together. Check your assembly with a small square and adjust as needed.

Now measure the opening for the bottom. Cut a piece that fits snugly and nail it in place with a new finish nails.

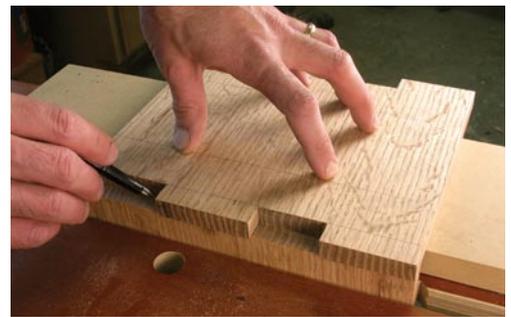
Finish the exterior of the knife block with a clear semi-gloss spray lacquer.

The bamboo skewers need to be 8" long. Don't cut them on the miter saw—that's risky. Bundle them up with tape and do the operation with a fine handsaw.

Drop the bamboo skewers into the cavity and fill the block until you have enough room for your knives. Other woodworkers I know have used other media in their knife



Swoop in. Remove the waste between the fingers in stages. Here's the first swooping cut.



A little tracing. Use the cuts on the sides to mark the shape on the ends.

blocks, including coffee beans.. **PW**

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Knife Block

NO.	ITEM	DIMENSIONS (INCHES)			MATERIAL
		T	W	L	
2	Sides	1/2	9	7 3/4	Oak
2	Ends	1/2	9	5 1/4	Oak
1	Bottom	1/2	4	6 1/2	Oak
1,200	Skewers	1/8 dia.	8		Bamboo

About This Column

Our "I Can Do That" column features projects that can be completed by any woodworker with a modest (but decent) kit of tools in less than two days of shop time, and using raw materials that are available at any home center. We offer a free online manual in PDF format that explains all the tools and shows you how to perform the basic operations in a step-by-step format. You'll learn to rip with a jigsaw, crosscut with a miter saw and drill straight with the help of our manual.



Visit ICanDoThatExtras.com to download the free manual.

