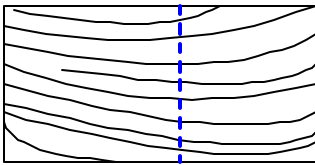


An Egg?

Carving an egg? This may sound like a pretty boring first project. It is actually a great icebreaker for folks new to carving. It helps illustrate the laws of grain direction, and allows the carver to make slicing cuts both with the grain and across the grain. Although it's a very attainable object to create, it also helps to build strength in your hands (strength you didn't know you had).

Laying Out

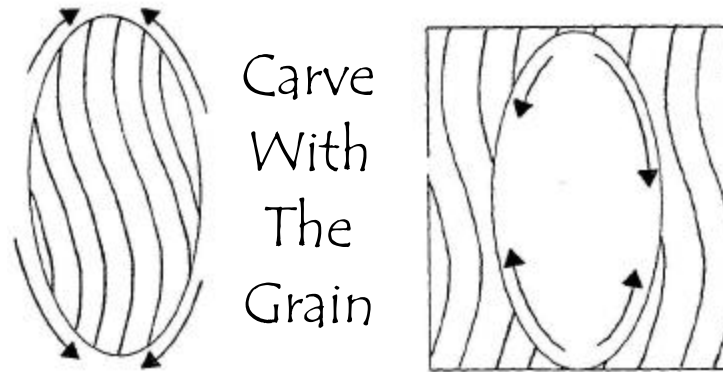


Lay out your egg so the grain is running the length of the block. An egg is not a perfect spiral, so we'll carve ours off-center. Using a pencil, divide the egg into thirds on all four sides. Pick one end as the fat end, and connect your marks on that side with a heavy pencil line. This line is our starting point and will remain the fattest part of our carving.

Carving

The first order of business is to slice off the corners of the egg. Start your cuts at the pencil line, and pull your knife out to the end of the block. Keep turning the block as you go and knock off the highest remaining corners. Once this end of the block begins to appear round, rotate your block end-for-end. Starting again at the pencil line, slice off the corners at the other end. Your block should resemble a cylinder at this point. Carefully round the flat section, and draw your line back on to the block. Our next step is to round the other ends. Up to this point, we have been making slicing cuts that have been parallel to the grain of the wood. Our next cuts will be at an angle to the grain. As you pull your blade through the wood at an angle, the fibers of the wood are sliced off, if your knife is sharp. This leaves two distinct surfaces on either side of the cut. One surface is left behind on either side of the cut. One surface is left solid and straight (cut made *with* the grain), while the other has peeled back and split away from the blade (cut made *against* the grain). The clean surface is what we want remaining on our egg, while the peeled back chip falls to the floor. Just to experiment, take tiny slicing cuts at the end of your block from a variety of directions. Cuts made with the grain will split. Whenever making a slicing cut, start slowly. If it starts to split rather than slice the wood, change the direction of your cut.





Continue rounding each end. Pause occasionally, holding your egg at arm's length to inspect your progress. The closer you get to complete your carving, the finer your cuts will become. As you near the very tip, or axis, of the egg, your cuts will be close to a 90° angle to the grain. You will need to make a delicate cut with a sharp edge to leave a clean surface. Take a moment to strop the knife's edge before making this cut.

Cleaning

When your block nears completion, take the time to go over the entire piece and clean up your cuts. When creating a carving (or anything that requires a period of time to be dedicated) there is the temptation to hold up the piece and call it finished. Let the project go cold. Then carefully carve away any torn grain, pencil marks, fingerprints, fuzzies, picks, and knife marks. Sanding your egg is not cheating. It does not make sense to spend all that time making clean cuts with a sharp knife just to sand all evidence of your handwork away.



Finishing

You will handle your egg often after carving it, so it will need some protection. Oil or spray sealer will seal the wood. A coat of wax after a few days will leave a soft glow to your creation.

From Mountain Star Studio's Carving Bench
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July 6, 1999