



Insight

Drawer handles

Peter Sefton reveals a sleek solution to opening and closing drawers

Find one of the most fundamental elements of furniture design is making the handle on a piece of work. It can be a make-or-break detail: it either enhances the item or has the opposite effect and detracts from the beauty of the piece of furniture.

Student projects

My students have recently completed a small table with a handmade drawer and, as part of the exercise, they have all had to design and make their own handle. Minimalist furniture is very much in vogue. Many pieces are without any visible handles, relying on



Hounds tooth dovetails to accommodate the central groove for the drawer pull

push-to-open drawer runners or fronts that protrude either over the face of a drawer rail, or over the upright edge of the cabinet allowing for a carved or routed cove giving a finger pull. That was not allowed within our design brief, so the students had to be a little more adventurous.

One of my mature students, Andrew Strickland, had a brown oak inlay line running around his table's apron rail and replicated this within his drawer front, incorporating a bowed inlaid drawer pull. This involved laminating two pieces of 2.2mm ash with a 0.6mm brown oak veneer sandwiched in-between. This added both strength and colour to the handle while making it look even more delicate than the 5mm section actually was. The lamination was then bandsawn and spokeshaved to form the inside of the curve, before sanding and pre-finishing the internal edge.

The drawer front was routed with a 5mm wide, 4mm deep, stopped groove with curved ends allowing for the bowed handle to flow and gain a solid fixing within the drawer front. The lapped dovetails were 'hounds tooth' style to accommodate the routed inlay, which enhanced his design.

Once the drawer making was completed and assembled, the drawer front was pre-finished and the pull was



Top: The drawer front routed, awaiting assembly

Above: Flushing down the drawer pull with a cabinet scraper

glued into position. After the G-clamps were removed, the curved handle was cabinet scraped, sanded into shape and flushed to the drawer front giving it a flowing flawless curve.

The final process was to hand-fit the drawer to a piston fit within the table carcass and final finishing. Andrew produced a very clean flowing handle – mission accomplished! ■

Wood

Brown oak (*Quercus robur*)
Ash (*Fraxinus excelsior*)

Peter Sefton

Peter Sefton is a well-known furniture maker who runs courses in fine woodworking, teaching and mentoring students at the Peter Sefton Furniture School. He also owns Wood Workers Workshop and he is a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Furniture Makers.
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