



Woodsmith **PLANS**

CLASSY CUTTING BOARDS



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Sweeping arcs and cherry accents help make these kitchen accessories as attractive as they are practical.



When it comes to choosing a material to make cutting boards out of, it's hard to beat wood. Natural wood has a charm and warmth that can't be matched by other surfaces. Plus, wood doesn't dull knives like some other materials.

But the question I usually face is what's the best size to make a cutting board. There are times when

you need one that's fairly large and other times when a smaller board will do just fine. And that's why this set of cutting boards is ideal.

These three cutting boards are really the same design, just in a variety of sizes. They're made of edge-grain maple. And each one has a cherry handle with a finger hole, making them easy to move around and hang up for storage.



▲ The cutting boards can perform double-duty as serving trays.

Making the Boards

Each of these cutting boards is made up of three parts—the panel, a handle, and a spline. I started by making the boards first.

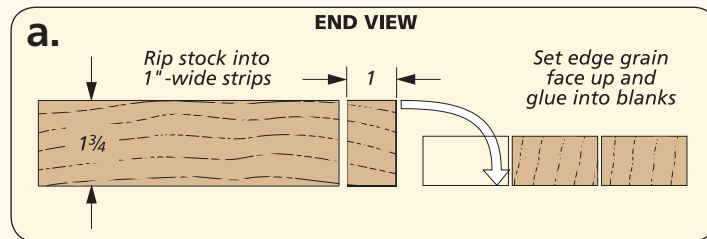
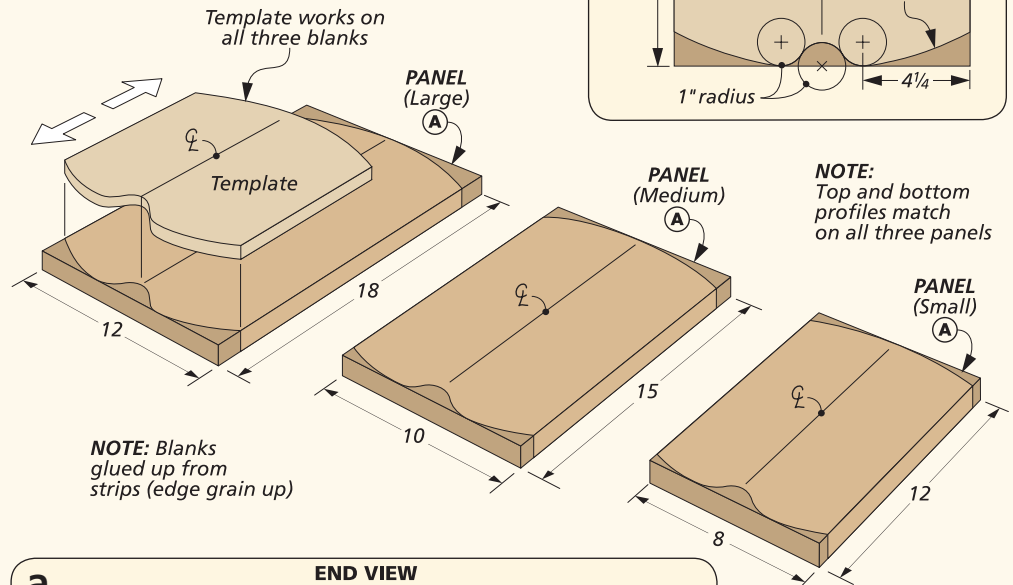
EDGE-GRAIN BLANKS. All the boards start out as oversize blanks glued up from strips of maple. But there's something worth noting here. I cut the 1"-wide strips out of 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ "-thick stock, and then rotated each strip 90° so the edge grain is facing up (detail 'a') before gluing them.

The reason for this is simple. Edge grain is tighter, harder, and will hold up better than the face grain. Plus, an edge-grain blank is less likely to warp than a blank that is glued up from face grain strips.

One other thing: You'll want to use a waterproof glue when gluing up the blanks. (I used Titebond III.) But even with this glue, it's a good idea to keep the finished cutting boards out of the dishwasher.

SLOTS. After cutting the blanks to overall size, you'll need to cut a slot on each end of the blanks. These slots will hold the handles and splines that will be added later. But it's a lot easier to cut these slots while the blanks are still square, rather than after the profiles have been made on the ends (refer to the How-To box at the bottom of the page).

PROFILES. Even though the boards are different sizes, the profiles on the ends are identical. To help lay



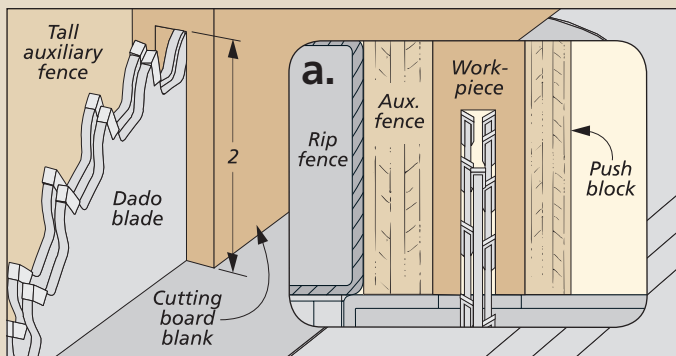
out the profiles, I made a template out of hardboard (detail 'b').

Centerlines drawn on the template and the blanks will help you line everything up. After tracing the profiles on the ends of the blanks, you can cut them out on the band

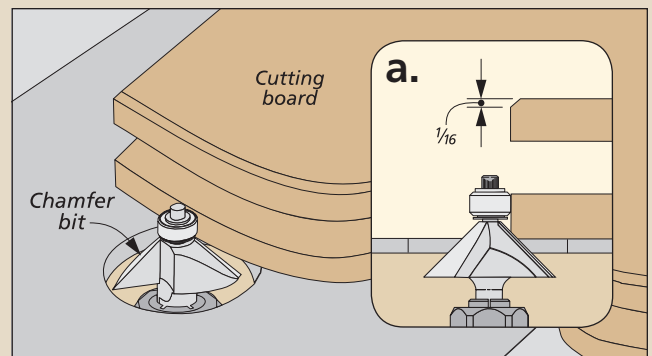
saw and then sand them smooth with a drum sander.

The last step before moving on to making the handles and splines is to rout a chamfer around all the edges. I did this on the router table, as you can see in the box below.

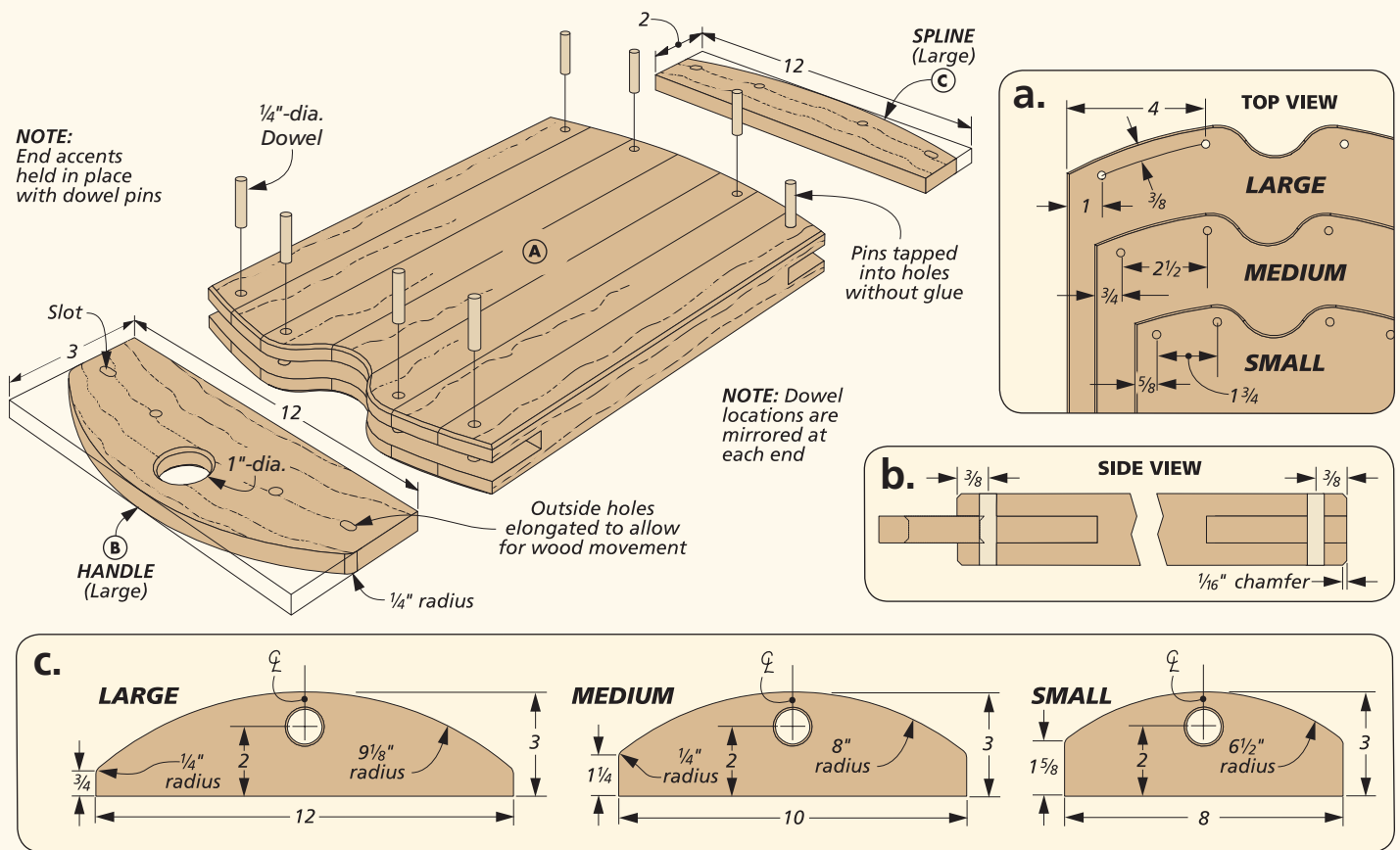
HOW-TO: CUTTING BOARD DETAILS



Cut the Slots. You'll need to use a tall auxiliary fence and special push block to cut the slots in the ends of the cutting boards. Shop Notebook on page 5 shows how this is done.



Chamfer the Edges. After cutting the boards to final size and shape, I eased the edges by routing a chamfer around both sides of each cutting board on my router table.



Adding the Handles

If you take a look at the drawing above, you'll see that each cutting board has a handle (with a finger hole) at one end and a spline at the other. These pieces are pinned in place with hardwood dowels. I started with the handles.

HANDLES. The radius of each of the three handles is slightly different (detail 'c'). After laying out the arcs (see How-To below), you'll want to cut them proud of the layout line and

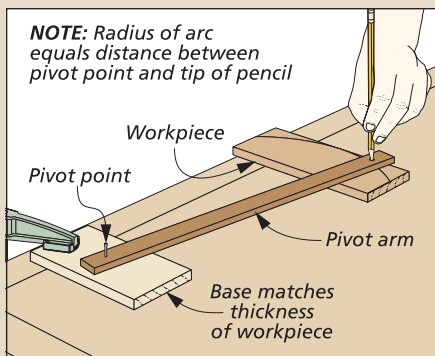
then sand the edges to the line. Next, you can take the handles over to your drill press and drill the finger holes with a Forstner bit. I also chamfered the edges of the finger holes before starting to work on the splines.

SPLINES. Unlike the handles, the splines are flush with the ends of the cutting boards. To get the best fit, I started by cutting the splines to rough size. After they are pinned in place, you can rout them flush.

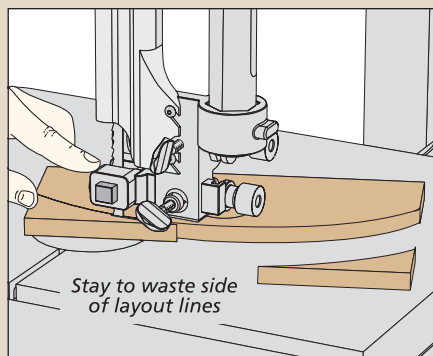
WOOD MOVEMENT. As mentioned earlier, the handles and splines are pinned in place with dowels. To drill the holes for the dowels, I simply inserted the handles and splines into the ends of the cutting boards and then drilled the holes. But because the grain of the handles and splines runs perpendicular to the grain of the cutting board, you'll have to allow for wood movement.

To do this, I just elongated the outer holes on each handle and

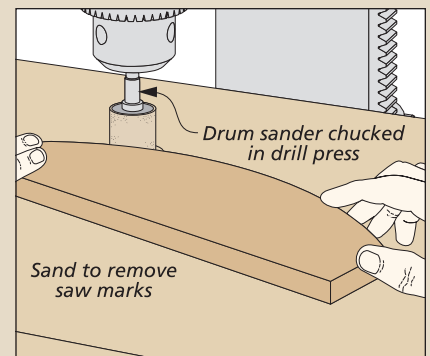
HOW-TO: CUTTING THE ARCS



Lay Out the Arc. This simple jig will help you draw the proper arc for each handle of the cutting boards.



Cut to Shape. After laying out the arcs, cut the handles to rough shape, staying to the waste side of the layout lines.



Sand to Final Size. Sand the handles to their final shapes before drilling the finger holes with a Forstner bit.

spline, using a hand drill. This allows the maple strips in the panels to expand and contract freely with changes in humidity.

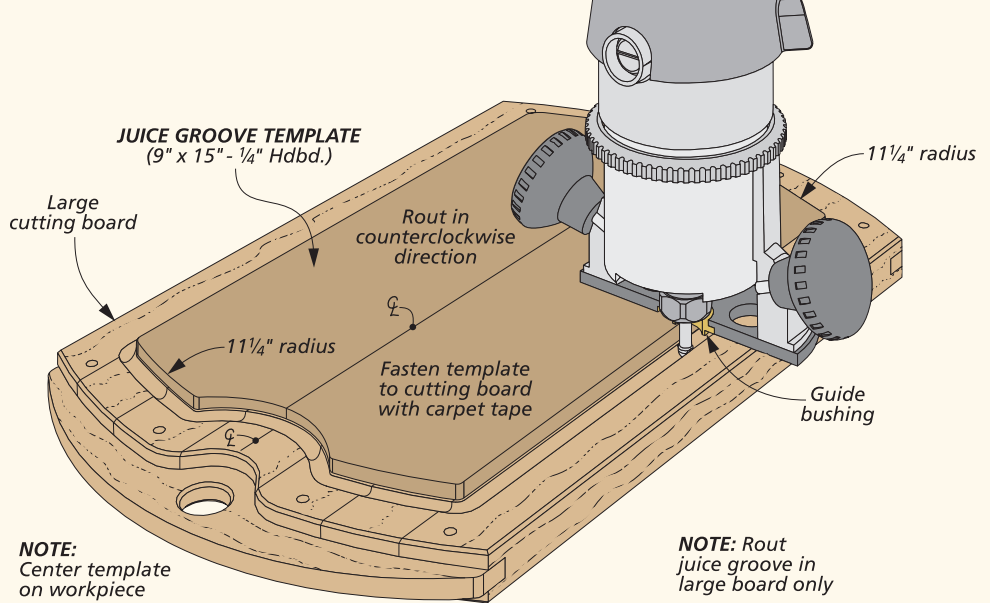
The handles and splines are installed using just a little glue in the center. Then the dowels are driven in place and sanded flush with the surface of the cutting board. After this is done, you can trim the spline flush with the end of the cutting board, using a router and a flush-trim bit, as you can see in the box below.

JUICE GROOVE. At this point, the two smaller boards are done. But there's one more detail to add to the large board — a "juice groove." This is a channel that runs around the board to capture the juices from any food that you may cut.

To make the juice groove, I used a router and a template, as shown in the drawing at right. The template is just a piece of hardboard shaped to mimic the profile of the cutting board. I mounted the template to the board using carpet tape.

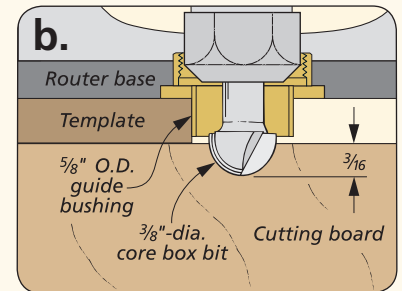
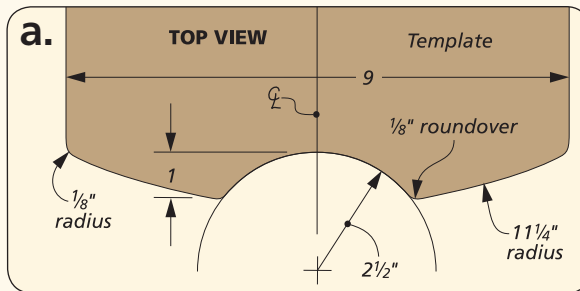
When you're ready to rout the groove, install a bushing and a core box bit in your router. I set the depth of the bit to cut a groove that's $\frac{3}{16}$ " deep. Then it's just a matter of routing in a counterclockwise direction around the template.

Once the groove is done, the final step is to apply a finish. I used General Finishes' Salad Bowl Finish on the cutting boards.



NOTE: Center template on workpiece

NOTE: Rout juice groove in large board only



MATERIALS & HARDWARE

Large Cutting Board

A Panel (1)	1 x 12 - 18
B Handle (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 - 12
C Spline (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 2 - 12

Medium Cutting Board

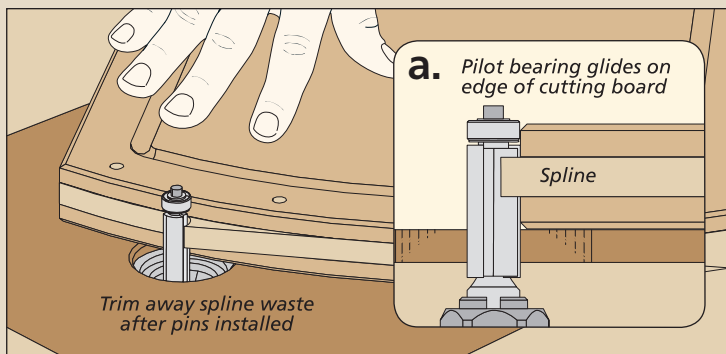
A Panel (1)	1 x 10 - 15
B Handle (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 - 10
C Spline (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 2 - 10

Small Cutting Board

A Panel (1)	1 x 8 - 12
B Handle (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 3 - 8
C Spline (1)	$\frac{3}{8}$ x 2 - 8

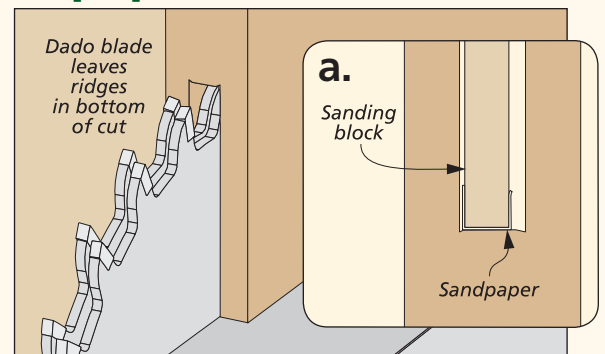
- (1) $\frac{1}{4}$ "-dia. Cherry Dowel (36" long)

HOW-TO: TRIM EDGES EVEN



Flush Trim. After securing the spline into a cutting board with hardwood dowel pins, use a flush-trim router bit to trim them even with the bottom arc of the cutting board.

Shop Tip: Flat Bottom



Sand Bottom Smooth. To get the bottom of the dado perfectly flat, wrap 120-grit sandpaper around a flat strip of wood and sand until smooth.

SHOP NOTEBOOK

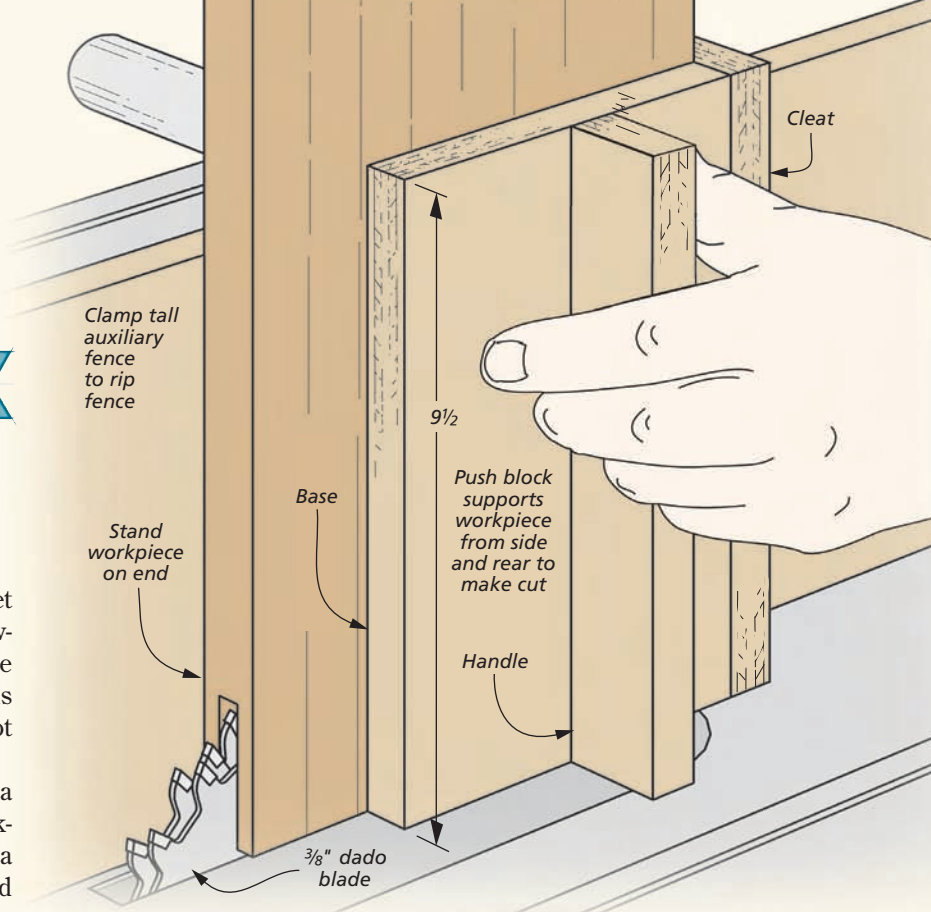
Cutting Deep Slots

Cherry accents really make the set of cutting boards stand out. However, it can be a challenge to cut the deep slots in the end of the boards on a table saw. There's just not enough backing to hold the parts.

To solve this problem, I built a push block specifically for tall workpieces. Used in combination with a tall auxiliary fence, it provides solid support for this task.

Making the push block is fairly straightforward. It's made from three pieces of $\frac{3}{4}$ " plywood. Detail 'a' on the right gives you all the information you need to build it.

The base and handle are simply glued together. The wide footprint of the base will provide plenty of support along the side of the workpiece. The handle is set back just



a little off-center to give you good leverage when pushing the workpiece through the blade.

A cleat attached to the back of the base pushes the workpiece from behind. You'll want to trim the cleat so it clears the fence, but leave it deep enough to help prevent chipout while you're pushing a workpiece through the blade.

