

# Krenovian details make a big difference

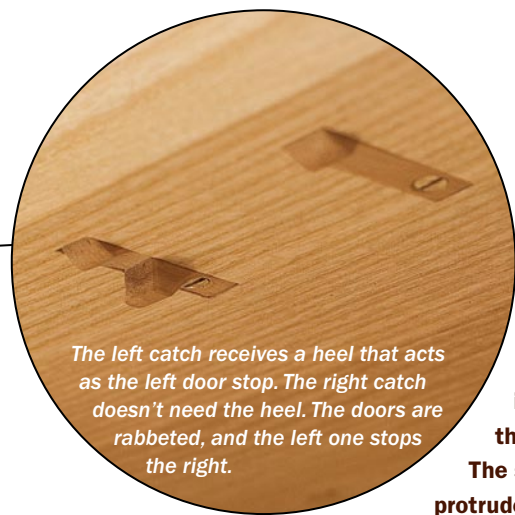
BY JIM BUDLONG

One of the features that make Krenov-style cabinets so friendly and special is all of the cool little details. As those familiar with the work of James Krenov know, he had a fondness for shaping small bits of wood with his homemade knives.

On this cabinet-on-stand project (see pp. 48-55), I added a number of these special details, including Krenov's hand-carved friction catches paired with strike-plate buttons—far more personal than manufactured door latches or hidden magnets. He also likes handles that are playful to the eye, friendly to the touch, and comfortable to use. Even the shelf supports are done by hand, with care and attention to form as well as function. And like Krenov, I left behind subtle tool marks to remind people that not everything in this crazy world is stamped out of a mold.

Try just one or all of these handmade touches. I think you'll find that Krenov was on to something. As he often said, "It's the little things that count."





The left catch receives a heel that acts as the left door stop. The right catch doesn't need the heel. The doors are rabbeted, and the left one stops the right.

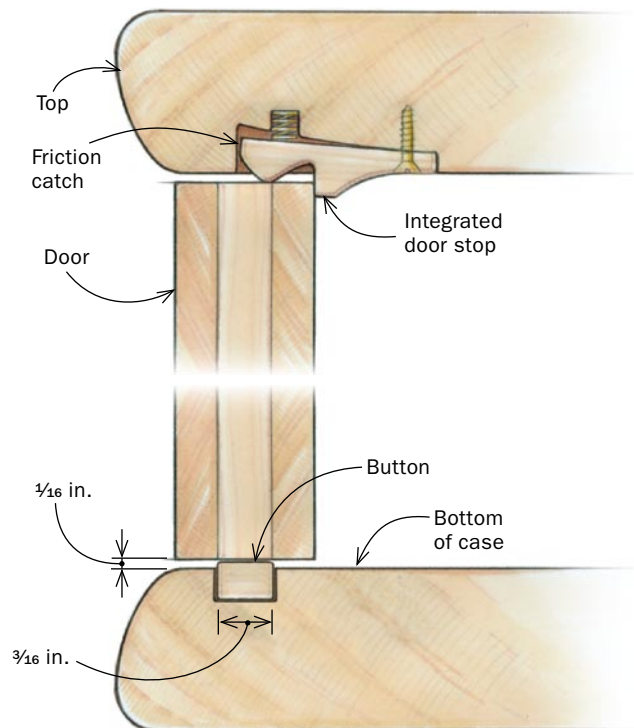
## Friction catches and strike-plate buttons

Friction catches are small pieces of wood (with a cam shaped on the front end) let into ramped mortises on the underside of the cabinet top with a spring behind them.

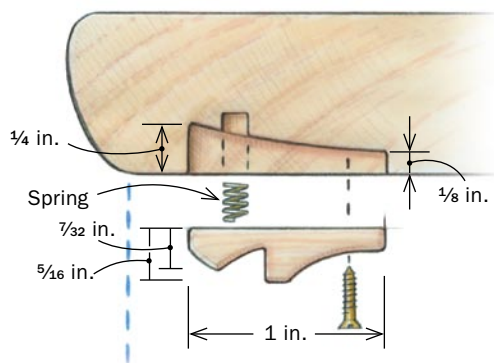
The strike-plate buttons are round, and barely protrude from the inside surface of the bottom.

The pressure felt from the springs and catches at the top of the doors coupled with the small button-like strike plates underneath the doors provides the user with a unique sensation as the door is operated. The friction catches and buttons don't need to be made as part of the cabinet-building process, but the mortises for them should be cut before the glue-up.

The friction catches are installed perpendicular to the front of the cabinet above the doors, about  $\frac{3}{4}$  in. from each side of center.



## INSTALL THE CATCHES



**A place for the spring.** On the drill press, create a small hole in the front of the mortise for a piece of spring (available at auto-supply stores).



**Chisel the mortise into a ramp.** This gives the end of the friction catch somewhere to go as the door hits against it.

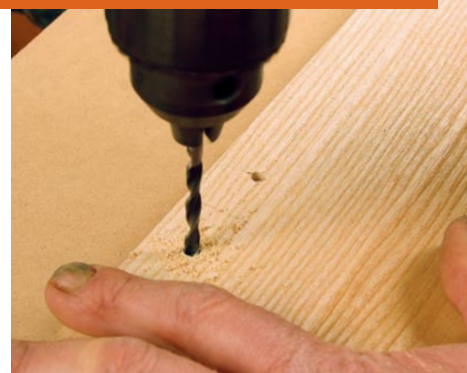


**Long strips make it easy to manage small parts.** Draw the profile on the stick, cut the shape on the bandsaw, and refine it with a chisel, keeping the extra length as long as possible.



**Use a knife to chamfer all the sharp edges.** After using a handsaw to cut the catch free from the long stick, detail all the edges and corners as desired.

## ADD THE BUTTONS

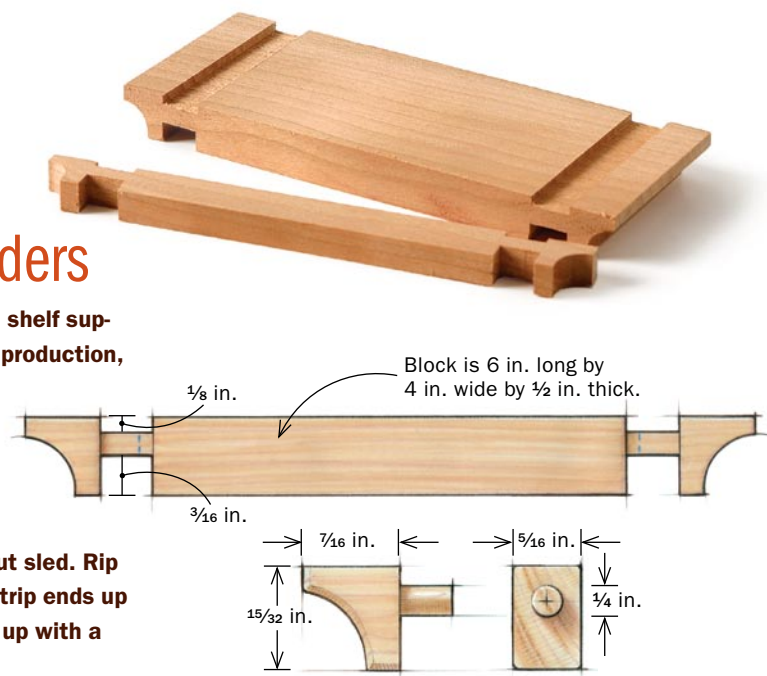


**Drill for the buttons.** The buttons are made from hardwood dowel stock. Round the tips slightly and glue them in.



## Hand-carved supports make elegant shelf holders

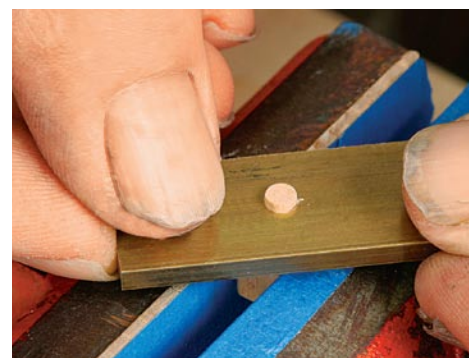
Like the friction catches, these small carved shelf supports don't have to be made during carcase production, but the holes need to be drilled before the carcase is glued up. To make the supports, start with a block of accent wood and use the tip of a Roman ogee bit to profile both ends. Then run the shoulders on the tablesaw using a stop block on a crosscut sled. Rip this chunk on the bandsaw into thin strips (each strip ends up with a roughed-out support on each end), clean them up with a block plane, and refine them by hand.



**Double-sided stick is easy to hold.** Use a small knife to detail the edges and corners, and use a chisel or tablesaw to cut the slight shoulders on the sides.



**Cut the supports free and size the tenon.** Carefully clamp the support into a small vise and round out the tenons using a sharp knife and small files.



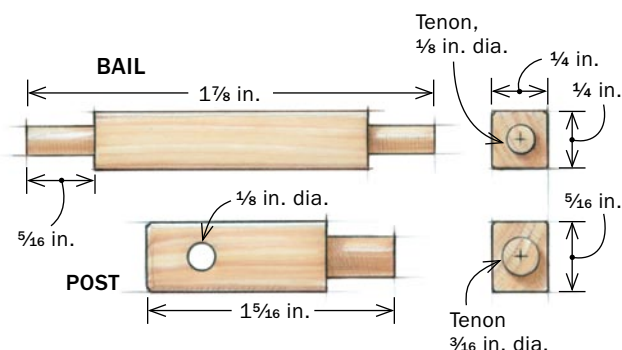
**Perfect the size and shape of tenons.** Having a 5/32-in.-dia. test hole in a scrap of hardwood or brass can be helpful during this process.



**Two posts and a bail combine to make a subtle pull.** Start by making the posts, and then create a bail to fit them. Pillow the ends of the bail tenons so they have a nice appearance and feel as they protrude through the holes in the posts.

## Pulls are the final touch

The pulls may be one of the last items you tackle in this project, but they are definitely one of the most important visual points. A successful pull should complement the general feel of an object. The color should be harmonious with the rest of the tones used, not so contrasting as to draw attention away from the items on display. The pulls should be comfortable and easy to use, located in a position that adds balance to the piece as a whole. They are made using some of the same techniques employed for the friction catches and consoles. Keep your workpieces over length for as long as you can, cut shoulders on the tablesaw, chisel and file tenons to size using a test hole to perfect them, and detail the edges and corners with a knife.



**Install the pull as one unit.** Glue the bail to the posts, and, before the glue sets, glue the whole pull assembly into the door stile.

