

SHOWCASE

A Serving Tray

How to use up waste veneers and please the family as well

by *Lionel Kay*

It is always a pleasure to find a way to use up what might be called "waste" materials around the shop. My wife had asked for a new serving tray, so I was able to fill her wish with this project and have a lot of fun for myself at the same time.

A classic pattern for laying veneers is known as the "X" design. It is a variation of the diamond pattern. I chose the "X" to use up a quantity of narrow mahogany veneer cut-offs left over from some previous project.

The narrow strips are trued up with edges planed and parallel. Ends are cut at an angle of 55 degrees, though this is optional. Different effects will result with different angles. Strips are then arranged to form rhomboids, whose dimensions conform to the size of tray desired.

The rhomboids (four are needed) are then cut and reassembled to form rectangles. These, in turn, are trimmed and taped together as one large surface ready for laying. For a diamond pattern, the right and left rectangles would be interchanged.

I had a strip of inlay to attach as a border and then added four strips of satinwood as an additional margin. Corners mitered and the whole taped together, the top was ready.

The tray core was a piece of 1/4-inch luan plywood. The bottom can be plain or fancy, as you wish. The top, core and bottom were laid at one time and were ready for finishing.

The molding was cut from a piece of 3/4-inch pine. The bevel is approximately six degrees, though again, it is a matter of taste. Top and bottom were veneered with very straight-grained sepele. The inside edge was made from glued up avodire/walnut/avodire, and the outside edge was a thin strip of zebrano that was just lying around waiting for this job. The rabbet was cut for a snug fit with the tray surface and the work on the molding was done.

I recommend finishing (according to your own preferred schedule) before assembly. I finished with an alcohol-resistant urethane varnish. It is best to finish the molding in one or two long strips before cutting to size and mitering. This is similar to prefinished picture frame molding and assures accurate fit at corners.

With finishing completed, the whole is assembled with glue and a single nail (counter-sunk and filled) in each mitered corner. No glue in the rabbet to allow for expansion and contraction!

Dashed lines in bottom drawing show how veneer is cut to make a rectangle from a rhomboid. Middle drawings show cross section of edge, including layering of veneers.

