CELTIC KNOT BEER CAPPER

Add a Little Class to Your Beer Cappers
By Jim Eagleton

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."
--Mary Poppins (quoting John Keats)

Like many things in life, a series of simple steps led to a complex-looking outcome.

My favorite part of woodturning is the creative part. Most of my turning is done in my head. A segmented glue-up is like a puzzle in reverse. I visualize what I want a piece to look like. I then try to figure out how to make it. Sometimes my "mistakes" are fun surprises.

I enjoy making things that are functional. I prefer projects that do not require much time. For those reasons, I make handles for a wide variety of household tools.

Some turners spend many hours creating a stunningly beautiful piece of art. Because of the time involved, those pieces are high value and have a limited market. I greatly admire the artists who have that much patience. *I like instant results.*

My work takes much less time. Also, I can make several of these at once. Because I do not have much time invested, I can give these away or sell them for a very reasonable price. I am not an "artist;" I am a "craftsman."

Materials List:
- 2 blanks of contrasting wood (holly and walnut)
- 1 short piece of copper or brass pipe 5/8" wide and 1" long for making the ferrule. (available at lumber and plumbing supply stores)
- Beer capper (available at woodturning supply stores)
- Wood glue, epoxy, water-resistant finish.

Tool List:
- Roughing gouge
- Spindle gouge
- Parting tool
- 4-prong drive center
- Cone-shaped revolving center
- 11/32 Drill bit
- Chop saw with miter capabilities
- Bandsaw
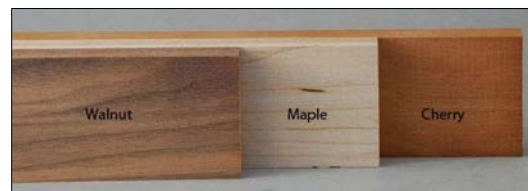
Create the blanks and turn the handle

1. Start with two blanks of contrasting wood, 1" × 1" × 8", or larger.

2. Set chop saw at 60 degrees. Using one of the blanks, cut a series of slats.
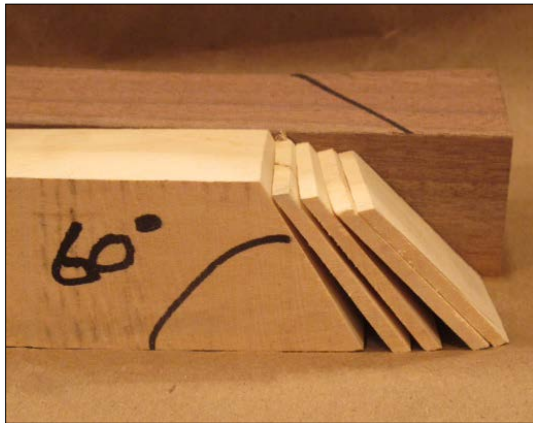
These should be cut at 60 degrees, across the grain. Slats should be the exact thickness of the kerf of your saw blade (approximately 1/8" or 3/32").

3. Cut the other blank at 60 degrees, 2" from the end.

4. Using a 90 degree jig (pictured at end), apply glue to the first slat and insert it into the kerf left by your saw blade. Clamp and let dry overnight. Rotate your blank 90 degrees, chop saw it at 60 degrees and insert the next slat.
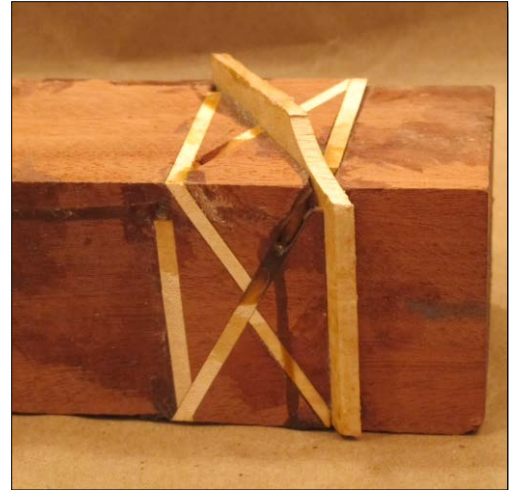
Gluing slats at an angle is a mess. After each slat, I trim the slat flush on the bandsaw or sand away the excess wood and glue. Position each slat so that the grain runs the same direction as the grain on your handle. This will reduce stress caused by seasonal wood movement. It will also make turning the handle easier as you will not be turning any endgrain. Use quality wood glue and consider using one that is water-resistant.

Because you are gluing endgrain to endgrain, the Celtic Knot will be a weak point in your handle. To minimize stress on the glue joint, position the Celtic Knot near the end of your handle, opposite from the tool.

Repeat on all four sides. It takes me four days to do this glue-up. I usually do a production run with several at a time.

5. Drill an 11/32"-diameter hole, 1 ½" deep in the end of the blank. (or follow manufacturers' recommendation). This hole will center the piece when the revolving cone center is tightened. This is also the hole that will receive your capper.

6. Turn tip supported by the cone center to size. Fit and epoxy copper ferrule. Cut copper ferrule to finished length, about 3/8", on the bandsaw. Sand rough edges on the copper ferrule.
7. Using a roughing gouge, spindle gouge and parting tool, turn handle round and shape. *This is the fun part.* The exact size is not important. Let the wood speak to you.
8. Finish with a water-resistant finish. Any good oil- or water-based polyurethane will do. This is a functional tool, not a piece of art.
9. Using epoxy, glue your capper into the hole.

Use capper to enjoy the beverage of your choice (only root beer if the power tools are on).

Dan Moerman has developed a jig that works well for the gluing process. This picture gives you an idea how to set it up. Dan Moerman is a professor at the University of Michigan. dmoerman@umich.edu