

## Easy Inlay Platter

It is always a good idea to start with a plan. The area for the inlay must be cut, filled and worked before cutting the remainder of the platter to keep the pigment dust from sullyng the wood. Because of this, you will need to know where and how deep to cut the groove for the inlay..... so a plan is needed.

Decide on a pattern or an arrangement of shapes for your inlay. The inlay pieces could be uniquely grained wood, a chequerboard pattern, M3 metal composite, tagua nut or anything you can think of that can be turned. Cut the inlay pieces with a bandsaw leaving them about 1/8" thick.

Mount the blank so that you are turning the top of the platter and clean up the face. Then, using a square ended scraper, cut a groove for the inlay, sized and positioned according to your plan. The sides of the groove should be straight in and not tapered. The actual depth of the inlay will be only about 1/8" – 3/16" so make the groove as deep as is necessary to accommodate any higher surfaces.... I.e., the rim of your platter, or a raised division between the inlay and the bowl part. You can rough out the other areas (rim and bowl) but don't make final cuts yet. **Leaving the chuck on**, remove the turning from the lathe.

Coat the edges of the inlay area with plain (unfilled and uncolored) epoxy. In this state the epoxy is liquid and can be brushed on with a disposable glue brush. This is to keep the pigment in the epoxy "grout" from seeping into the end grain. At the same time the pattern pieces can be arranged and glued into place in the bottom of the groove.

Mix (according to the Guidelines handout) enough epoxy to fill the space; (usually one batch will do it). Add enough 410 filler to the epoxy to make a thick syrup. Too thin a mix will be harder to turn and a too-thick mixture will not flow into the nooks and crannies of your design resulting in voids. It is especially important with this method to de-gas the epoxy first, so pour it out onto a flat surface and squidgy it back and forth with a spatula to release the gases. It helps if you let it sit for a few minutes as well. Then scoop it up and pour it into the pattern being careful to work it into any tight spots. A syringe is sometimes helpful.

When cured, remount on the lathe. Using a **small square ended scraper**, clean off the inlay just until the pattern emerges. I recommend using a scraper because the inlay is quite thin and a gouge can be too aggressive. If there are any bubbles, this is the time to fix them. Small bubbles might disappear in the texture but large ones should be filled, which means mixing up a tiny batch and matching the color as best you can. If this becomes necessary, a tiny amount of epoxy can be mixed using drops..... 5 drops of resin (singly, from the end of a popsicle stick) to 1 drop of hardener.

Once the inlay has been turned and sanded, the epoxy may be textured with a dremel tool. Texture adds an extra dimension to the inlay making it far more interesting. When the inlay is done, finish turning the rest of the platter.

