

Basic Natural Edge Bowl

Use fresh-cut wood with bark still on. The bark will stay on better in winter-cut wood. Mount the curved bark side toward the headstock to shape the outside first.

Use a Forstner bit to drill out a hole in the center of the bark side of the piece. That will provide access to solid wood for the spur drive to hold and spin the piece while turning.

An alternative is to use a faceplate on the bark side. Since that side is curved, you may only be able to use two screws through the faceplate and will likely have to chip off some bark so you can get the faceplate close enough to the wood that the screws will bite.

Shape outside and bottom of bowl, leaving a 3/8" long tenon large enough to be held by jaws of chuck. Cut from bottom toward top of bowl on bottom half of bowl and top toward bottom for top half of bowl. Once outside is turned to shape, use thin CA glue to soak the exposed bark edge and wait until dry. If not, then continue the process by sanding the outside of bowl, although sanding may be difficult if wood is still too wet. Remove faceplate, then chuck piece by tenon in jaws of chuck.

Turn inside of bowl, starting at center and working first toward outside edge and then toward bottom, per demonstration. This is really the tricky part. Watch your thickness closely and match the thickness of the sides to the thickness of the ends by cutting evenly as though the wood were solid all the way from the top edge to the bottom. Be cautious of the ends of the bowls, those whirling wings, as they will hurt if you get your hand in there! Once you are nearly at the end, soak the inside edge of the bark with thin CA glue and let dry. Turn to final shape with one more smooth pass with a freshly sharpened bowl gouge and sand inside of bowl.

Remove bowl from chuck. Put faceplate on waste wood. Turn jam chuck. Pad jam chuck with paper towel and place bowl over shaped wood, then bring up tailstock to hold in place. Turn and shape base of bowl, getting as close to center as practicable. This is best done with a live center which is tapered to the bottom of the bowl. Sand as far as you can toward the center.

Remove bowl from jam chuck; remove small tenon on bottom with a saw and carving tool or chisel, and sand base of bowl. Hand sand with the grain to remove sanding marks.

If you wish to let the bowl dry before completing it, turn it so it is about an inch thick. Actually, the thickness should be 1/10th of the diameter of the bowl to ensure enough wood is left after it dries to re-round it. Apply a product like Anchorseal and let it dry, then store it for a year. When dry, re-turn to round, then to final thickness, and finish as desired. Since a bowl will tend to change to oval as it dries and a natural edge bowl will always appear to be oval anyway, you may wish to turn it to final thickness and sand it to finish. Once completed, let it sit for a couple weeks before you finish it to let it dry more thoroughly. Then hand-sand it with the grain and apply whatever varnish or other finish you wish.