Creating a Mortar and Pestle

Since this project will be used for grinding seeds and spices the wood needs to be a very hard wood and the finish needs to be food safe. If you look on the internet you will see a wide variety of shapes and something they may give you an idea for yours.

First let's make the mortar (cup portion).

Step 1

Select your wood. I started with a piece of Lychee because it is extremely hard but as I turned it cracks appear as they often do with Lychee so I used another piece of very heavy and seems to be hard wood. My guess is it is Elm but I could be wrong.

Step 2

I squared the ends and put it between centers on the lathe to turn it round. I realized it was longer than needed so I put a tenon on both ends, then parted off the excess for a future project. The project portion was then chucked and turned round.

Step 3

The outside was shaped as desired with a bowl gouge.

Step 4

The outside needs to be sanded. On this project I sanded up to 2000 grit. Once the sanding was complete two coats Walnut Oil finish was applied and buffed. Finally, a coat of Renaissance Wax was applied and buffed.

Step 5

The inside was turned starting with a bowl gouge but since the interior is to be rounded I finished with a round carbide tool. The inside was sanded up to 2000 grit and two coats of Walnut Oil was applied and buffed.

Step 6

The Mortar needed to be parted off the chuck. I ran into some difficulty with the parting tool jumping out of the groove and had to do some additional sanding. (continued next page)

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Step 6 continued

Since parting off the Mortar with a parting tool I decided to use a jam chuck. With the mortar in a jam chuck the tenon on the bottom was removed, the bottom was sanded, details added an finish applied. The final nub was removed and that area finished.

Now to make the Pestle

The Pestle needs to be turned to fit the bottom of the Mortar. Since this Mortar has a rounded bottom on the inside the Pestle needs to be shaped in a similar fashion.

Step 1

A piece of of Macacauba wood was selected and turned between centers, putting a tenon on one end.

Step 2

The Pestle was chucked and turned to desired shape with the live center used for support through most of the process. It was sanded to 2000 grit and several coats of Walnut Oil applied. The tailstock end was separated and sanded first, then the end closest to the head stock. The primary grinding end was shaped to fit the Mortar. The handle was made for a comfortable fit and the top end rounded smaller so it could be used if a smaller grinding end is needed.

Have fun
Making and Using
this project