

Dovetails on a Table Saw

Andrew Davis, December 2016

Probably nothing in the annals of woodworking literature has spilled more ink than the subject of dovetails. I estimate every woodworking magazine (or guild) runs at least one story on dovetails every year. So, a fair conclusion might be that we haven't figured out the best way to make a dovetail joint. And that leaves aside the issues of half-blind vs. through. More to the point however, is that there are at least three different ways to make dovetails – i) by hand, ii) with a jig for hand-held or table-mounted routers, or iii) on a table saw with or without a special rip blade (Forrest). I might even be missing one approach based on the bandsaw (FWW #219)? And some online resources show you how to use one approach for the tails and a different one for the pins. When it comes to cost, accuracy, flexibility, and set-up time, I'm betting that these different approaches all have different advantages and disadvantages. And more to the point, it's probably best to pick one approach and master it, rather than try them all.

None of the dovetail-jig-owning woodworkers I know have spoken of their devices with high praise. And those who cut by hand generally speak with great pride about their work. Our December EMGW session will focus on the third approach – using the table saw. As a precursor, you might want to watch this six-minute video on the subject that uses two fences – one for the tails, one for the pins and a simple flat bottom rip blade with a little chisel clean up at the end.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ChCPX7G3u_s

If you do a google search, you will find multiple sources for both “dovetails on the table saw” and “building a jig for dovetails on the table saw”