Resawing at the Tablesaw

It’s often the perfect tool for the job

By Paul Anthony

The technique of resawing refers to slicing wood across its widest dimension. It’s basically a form of slabbing done to make thin stock from thick stock. It’s also used to create book-matched figure, where resawn pieces are edge-joined to create a mirrored pattern for use as a door panel, box lid, or tray bottom, such as the one on page 30.

Resawing is usually done on the bandsaw, which is good at slicing wide boards, and in one pass. Plus, the thin blade on a bandsaw makes a narrower kerf, reducing waste and increasing yield. That said, resawing on a bandsaw can be fussy, and depends on a sharp blade, well adjusted guides, and a meticulous fence setup. On the other hand, resawing on the tablesaw is fairly straightforward. Although making deep cuts like this with the stock on edge can feel like a dicey operation, it’s not dangerous with the proper saw setup. And, by cutting in from both edges of a board, you can effectively double the cutting depth of the blade, allowing a typical 10” tablesaw to resaw stock up to 6” wide.

Mirror figure. One big benefit of resawing figured wood is that it creates a nearly symmetrical book-match when the sawn boards are opened like pages. Edge-glued together, these boards will become a stunning panel.

If your saw isn’t already outfitted with a splitter or riving knife, go to woodcraftmagazine.com for an article on shop-made splitters.
5 keys to safe, successful resawing

Resawing at the tablesaw the first time can seem scary, given that you’re feeding a board on edge into perhaps a fully raised blade. But there’s no need to be nervous with the proper setup:

1. **The right blade.**
   For best results in hard wood, use a 20-to 30-tooth rip blade, which will chew through thick stock without bogging down. A thin-kerf blade will cut more easily than a \( \frac{1}{8} \)"-kerf blade, especially on underpowered saws.

2. **A splitter or riving knife.**
   A properly aligned splitter or riving knife is crucial because it keeps the work against the fence once it passes the blade, preventing kickback. Align the splitter with the side of the teeth that face the fence.

3. **A featherboard.**
   For safety and accuracy, set up a featherboard in front of the blade to keep the workpiece firmly against the fence while allowing forward motion and helping prevent kickback.

4. **A suitably tall fence.**
   For proper support, the fence should contact most, if not all, of the workpiece. When ripping work taller than the stock fence, set up an auxiliary tall fence to do the job.

5. **A shoe-style pusher.**
   For best control, use a pusher with a long sole, which allows holding the work down against the table while the heel of the pusher does the feeding.

Resawing in a single pass

The first order of business is to joint and plane the piece to consistent thickness, and then joint the edges square to the faces. This ensures stability and accurate slicing while feeding. Set your blade height no more than about \( \frac{1}{4} \)" above the stock. Adjust your rip fence for the desired piece thickness plus \( \frac{1}{32} \)", to be planed away later. Set up a featherboard to firmly press against the stock just in front of the blade, place a pusher close at hand, and then cut as shown. Before beginning the next cut, joint the face that will be contacting the fence. Then repeat the process as before.

Steady and confident does it. Begin the cut holding the piece down and against the fence with your left hand, while pushing it forward with your right. Feed as fast as you comfortably can, and at a steady rate. As soon as the trailing end of the board is resting on the table, bring your pusher into play. Follow through using the pusher until the cut is completed.
Resawing can be done in two passes instead of one, making for a safer operation because each of the two cuts is shallower than a full cut. Resawing in two passes also allows you to slice a wider board.

Although a typical splitter won’t work for this non-through cut, you can use a short splitter mounted in a zero-clearance throat plate. (See onlineEXTRA.) When resawing wide pieces, use a tall fence. This may be as simple as an auxiliary fence screwed to your rip fence, or you can make a box-style fence that fits tightly atop your rip fence. Set the fence for the desired finished thickness plus \(\frac{1}{32}\)”, and raise the blade to reach slightly more than halfway through the stock.

Using a featherboard forward of the blade, make your first cut, then flip the stock end-for-end to make a second pass that will complete the cut. Before resawing the next slice, joint the face that will be contacting the fence. Then repeat the entire process.

**Flip and repeat.** Rotate the piece end-for-end, with the same face against the fence. With a shoe-style pusher at the ready (behind the fence here), begin the second cut in the same manner.

**Half-cut for starters.** With the blade raised halfway through the stock, feed the board steadily and as quickly as you comfortably can, continuing to hold the piece firmly against the tall fence.

**Smooth follow-through.** For safety’s sake, use a pusher to complete the cut, which prevents the parts from possibly pinching against the blade at the end of the cut.