Do More with DOMINO

In a class by itself, this pricey power tool makes mortising easy and accurate enough to change the way you do woodworking

By Tim Snyder

When I had my first look at the Domino DF 500, I wasn't that impressed. The tool's resemblance to a biscuit joiner left me wondering why Festool would try to compete with well-made tools from Porter-Cable, DeWalt and Lamello. I was in for a surprise. Instead of milling narrow, shallow biscuit slots, the Domino cuts precise mortises of different sizes with surprising speed and precision. This performance is possible because of a unique drivetrain that combines router-level RPMs with oscillating action. By using different spiral-fluted cutters and making adjustments on the machine, you can tailor your loose-tenon joinery to fit your project. To make the job even faster and easier, you can buy ready-made loose tenons that match your mortise sizes.

Building on the popularity of the first Domino joiner (the DF 500), Festool developed an XL model that can mill mortises that

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### Domino Joiner DF 500 Q $895.00

The Domino DF 500 was Festool's first portable mortising machine. With four mortising widths, this tool can handle anything from face frames and delicate slat assemblies to small furniture projects and cabinet doors.

**Basic price includes:** Systainer, power cord, wrench, 6mm cutter. Three other cutters available, along with matching Domino tenons.

| RPM: 23,400 |
| TOOL WEIGHT: 7 lbs. |
| MORTISING DEPTHS: 5 (¼"-1¼", 15mm-28mm) |
2. MORTISE

The DF 700 takes up where the 500 leaves off, offering larger and deeper tenoning capacity that’s suitable for full-size door construction and larger furniture. Basic price includes:

- Systainer
- Power cord
- Wrench
- Cross stop
- Trim stop
- 12mm bit

Three other bits available.

RPM: 21,000
Tool weight: 11.6 lbs.
Mortising depths: 12 (5⁄8" - 2 3⁄4", 15mm-70mm)

3. ASSEMBLE

Precise, strong, flexible and fast. Domino cutters rotate and oscillate to cut precise, smooth-sided mortises. Completing the joinery shown in these three photos took less than three minutes, from layout to clamp-up. Designed with production-friendly features, both Domino models allow you to use different bits, depth settings and mortise widths, along with a matching selection of loose tenon “Dominos.” The result: Versatile joinery capabilities that enable you to handle a wide variety of cabinetry and furniture projects.

Domino XL Joiner DF 700 - $1,310.00

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are larger and deeper. Like other Festool power tools, both Domino models connect with a tool-triggered vacuum to deliver close to dust-free performance. Every Domino owner I’ve spoken with agrees that these tools are expensive, but worth every penny. See if you agree.
Festool tool designers are adept at anticipating real-world uses for their tools and incorporating features that save time and improve ease of use, without sacrificing precision. They did their homework with the Domino, using detents for common fence angles, adding stops for different stock thicknesses, and developing useful attachments to facilitate spacing mortises and mortising small parts. The cross-pin and trim stop attachments shown below are Festool accessories that can be purchased separately for Domino joiners or bundled into “sets” when buying a new machine.

**Production-friendly features save time when a project**

**Quick bit changes.** Flipping a lever separates the Domino’s drivetrain from the fence assembly, providing access to a threaded chuck. The polished thrust rods slide smoothly in specially lubricated housings.

**Mortise alignment without measuring.** Attach the cross-pin adapter to set regular intervals between mortises. This attachment eliminates the need to make matching alignment marks across joining parts.

**Small part solution.** The trim attachment has a pair of adjustable fences that keep small parts (like the stretcher rung shown above) perfectly positioned for mortising.

**Repeatable fence height settings.** The stepped design of the fence height gauge provides multiple stops that enable you to quickly return to a specific setting. Aftermarket gauges are available that show imperial rather than metric stops (see p. 34).
Different Options for Dominos

You can make your own loose tenons to match Domino mortises. But it would be very difficult to duplicate the precision and machining that makes Festool Dominos so useful. Standard Dominos are made from European beech. Mahogany Dominos are available for outdoor projects.

All Dominos have size labels incised into their faces, along with shallow recesses that do a good job of holding glue. The tiny grooves along the curved sides provide an escape route for air and excess glue, allowing each tenon to seat fully in its mortise.

If you’re buying a Domino joiner, it makes sense to buy a Systainer that contains your tool’s full range of Domino sizes. Otherwise, you can buy smaller boxes of individual sizes.

Beech and mahogany Dominos are shown above.

Snug but smooth. Tiny grooves machined into the sides keep the fit snug but facilitate easy installation. Beech and mahogany Dominos are shown above.

Select your size. You can buy a Systainer containing an assortment of Domino sizes or small boxes of specific sizes.

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Aftermarket accessories add versatility

Considering the Domino joiner’s popularity, it’s not surprising that different accessories have been developed to make the tool more useful. Seneca Woodworking has the largest selection of these aftermarket items, offering useful accessories for both Domino models. Two of my favorites are shown below. It’s important to note that using non-Festool products may void the tool’s warranty.

Small mortise capability. Install this threaded extension on an DF 700, and you’ll be able to use smaller DF 500 cutters on the larger machine.

Easier adjustments. By replacing the metric stock thickness gauge with this aftermarket version, you get fence stops compatible with common dimension lumber thicknesses.

Knock-down hardware for 14mm mortises

Domino Connectors is a new system of knock-down hardware designed to work with the DF 700’s largest (14mm) mortise. The entire hardware kit comes in a standard-size Systainer, as shown below. The KD components enable you to make frame connections (like bed rail to post) and butt-joint “countertop” connections. 14mm Dominos are included with the kit, for use in maintaining strength and alignment. Although the bin of components looks daunting at first glance, the system doesn’t take long to master.

Bed frame solution. The threaded stud that extends between fixed components has a dished end. When the pointed set screw is tightened, it engages the dished profile to pull the joint tight.

Countertop assembly. Alternating beech tenons with KD fittings creates tight, strong butt joints.

It’s all in the box. Festool’s Connectors system even includes snap-in-place plastic covers for the mortises, in three different colors.