Souped-Up **SPINDLE GOUGE**

Adding a side grind makes this roughing tool twice as useful.

By Michael Kehs

I make a lot of turned boxes (see p. 51) and other work that requires turning a tenon on the end of a short spindle in order to mount the blank in a 4-jaw chuck. A while ago, when visiting the shop of a friend who does similar work, I spied an unusually sharpened spindle roughing gouge. Its sides were ground back at about 45° at the endmost 2” or so. My friend explained that the modified grind creates a multipurpose tool that allows him to rough out a spindle from square stock, and then immediately turn a mounting tenon without switching tools. When he said that it was one of the best gouge configurations he’s ever used, I decided to make my own. Having used it for some time now, I have to concur that it’s a great modification. After all, the fewer tools needed for a particular project, the faster you can work, and the fewer tools you need to sharpen.
How it works
A standard spindle roughing gouge, with its U-shaped flute and 45° bevel, excels at spindle stock preparation. (It should never be used for faceplate work or bowl shaping.) The tool is primarily used to reduce a squared spindle stock blank to its rough final diameter. The side grind comes in when your next move is to create a jaw-mounting tenon. To cut the tenon, roll the tool over on its side as shown in the main photo, with the bevel riding the stock at the desired location of the tenon shoulder. Then lift the handle to engage the cutting edge, and peel away the wood. When cutting broad areas, take a series of successively deeper cuts to reach your desired diameter.

Creating the side grind
Shaping the sides isn’t difficult, especially since you’re not creating a cutting edge; you’re merely removing excess metal that would otherwise impede the cutting action of the main bevel. To grind each side to the necessary 45° bevel, hold the gouge with the shank parallel to the face of the grinding wheel, and work the endmost 1¼” or 2” of the gouge. You’ll be removing a lot of metal, so take your time and keep the gouge cool by occasionally quenching it in water. Stop when you’re just shy of a knife edge.
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