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- Step by Step construction instruction.
- A complete bill of materials.
- Exploded view and elevation drawings.
- How-to photos with instructive captions.
- Tips to help you complete the project and become a better woodworker.



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Classic Kitchen Island



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Classic Kitchen Island

Kitchen islands are just wonderful — just ask editor Rob Johnstone, owner of this handsome project. It has a counter-height work surface where you can also eat, featuring ample storage as well as being darn good to look at. This project is reminiscent of an old-fashioned butcher's table, but it's a lot easier to build because the top is a slick, built-up assembly rather than a heavy chunk of hard maple.



The legs are a glued-up hollow construction. Because the plan was to paint the base, we used yellow poplar, a stable wood that accepts paint well.

Wrap-around Top

To achieve the butcher block look and strength, Rob began by cutting two pieces of birch plywood (pieces 1) and glued and screwed them together to form the core. Next, he selected attractively figured hard maple lumber to glue up for the top (piece 2). Even though Rob purchased 3/4" S-4-S lumber, he still took the time to make sure the edges were dead straight with a pass on the jointer. After Rob glued up the top, he took it to a cabinet shop to have it sanded smooth and flat on a wide belt sander. You can flatten it yourself with a plane or hand-held belt sander ... but he was in a hurry.

Once the top is flat, smooth and trimmed to size, glue the top edges (pieces 3) in place, which provides an illusion of thickness. Add to the illusion by making the end caps (pieces 4). Cut them to size and then plow a stopped groove on their inside faces (as shown in the *drawings* on page 155). Now slice biscuit slots into the top to match the grooves you just plowed. The biscuits must not stick out farther than the depth of the endcap grooves, or you'll have a big problem. Glue the biscuits in place, and make sure there are no excess glue drops to harden and get in the way. Put the top onto the plywood core: there needs to be a gap of at least 3/16" between the core and the sides of the top, but the biscuited

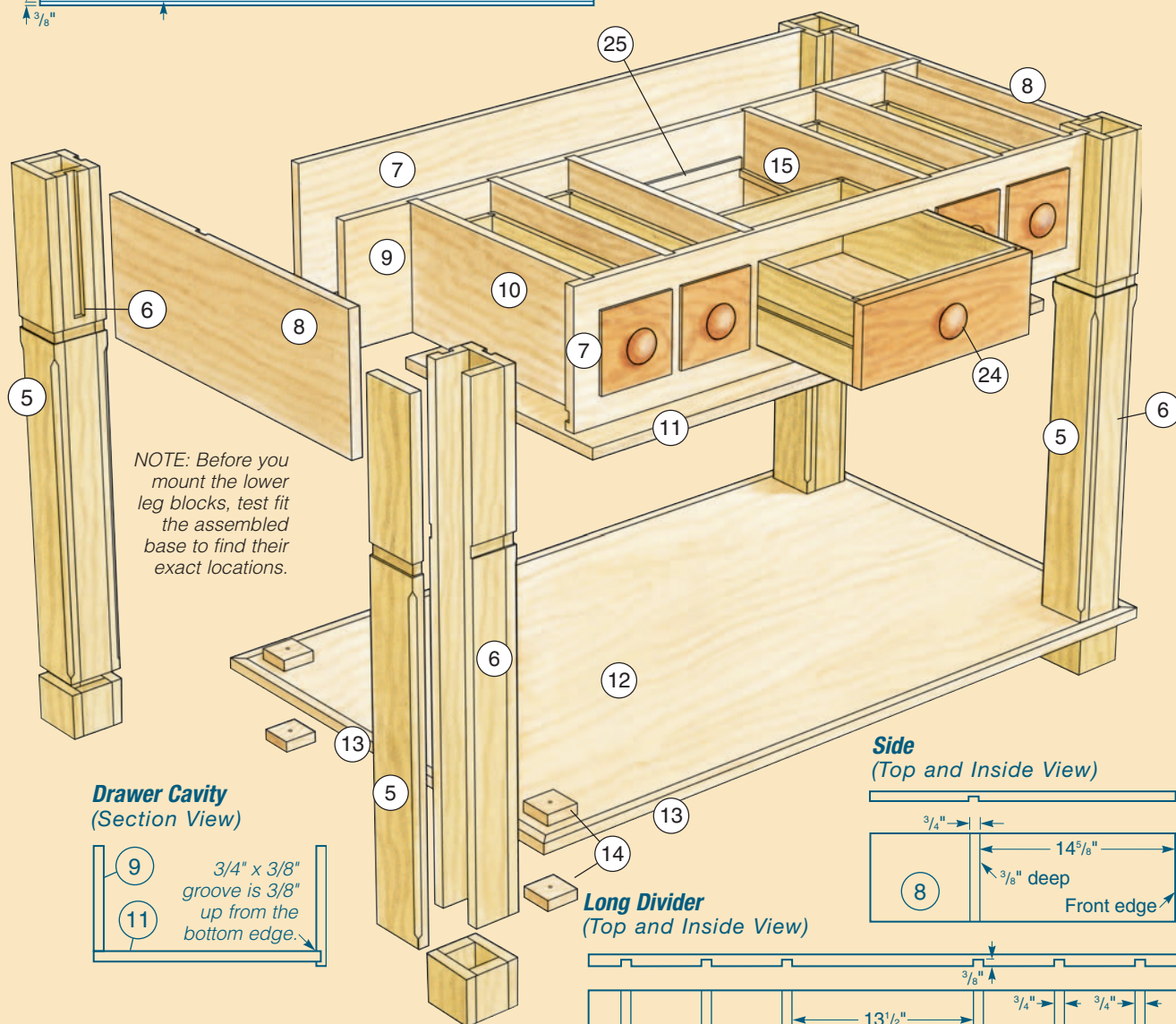
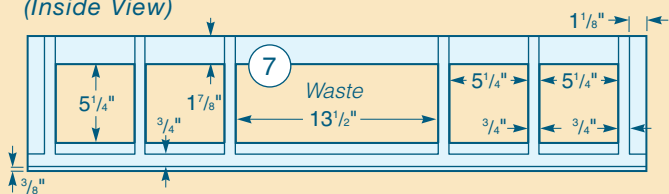
Base Exploded View

MATERIAL LIST—TOP ASSEMBLY

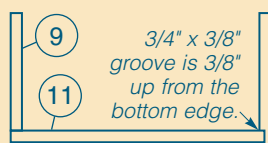
		T	x	W	x	L
1	Core (2)	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	x	$40\frac{7}{8}$ "	x	$52\frac{1}{2}$ "
2	Top (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	x	$40\frac{1}{2}$ "	x	$52\frac{1}{2}$ "
3	Top Edges (2)	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	x	$2\frac{1}{4}$ "	x	$52\frac{1}{2}$ "
4	End Caps (2)	$\frac{3}{4}$ "	x	$2\frac{1}{4}$ "	x	42"

Front

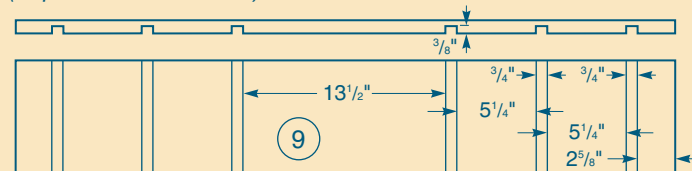
(Inside View)



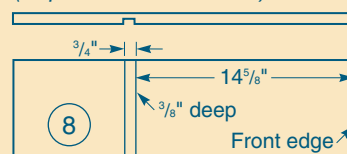
Drawer Cavity (Section View)



Long Divider (Top and Inside View)



Side (Top and Inside View)



ends of the top must match the core exactly. Put the endcaps onto the top with the biscuits nestled in their grooves. **DO NOT GLUE THIS PIECE ON!** Drill counterbored screw holes through the endcaps and screw them to the core. This allows the laminated top to expand and contract with seasonal humidity without fracturing. Plug the screw holes, sand the top smooth, and set it aside for a bit.

The Basic Base

There is nothing tricky about constructing the base unit. Begin by creating the legs from the staves and fillers (pieces 5 and 6). Cut them to size, then glue and clamp together. Their hollow construction will come in handy later. Once the glue has cured, sand them smooth and trim them exactly to length on the table saw. Go ahead and cut off the feet, and set them aside. Now use the table saw to reveal the little decorative dado around the barrel of the leg. (See the *Elevation Drawing on the next page* for these details.) Use a router in a router table to plow the grooves into the upper faces of the legs. Square up the ends of the grooves so they are ready for the front, back and sides

(pieces 7 and 8). Finally, use your router and a large chamfering bit to form the decorative leg bevels.

Cut the remaining sheet stock parts (pieces 9, 10, 11 and 12) to size. There are a number of dados and grooves to be cut into these pieces. Form them all on the table saw with a dado head installed. Again, the *Elevation Drawings* will specify the details.

Cut openings for the drawers in the face of the front after you form the dados

and groove in its back face. Miter the shelf trim (piece 13) around the shelf (glue and finish nail it securely), and cut the leg blocks (pieces 14) and drawer slides (pieces 15) to size, but set them aside for the time being.

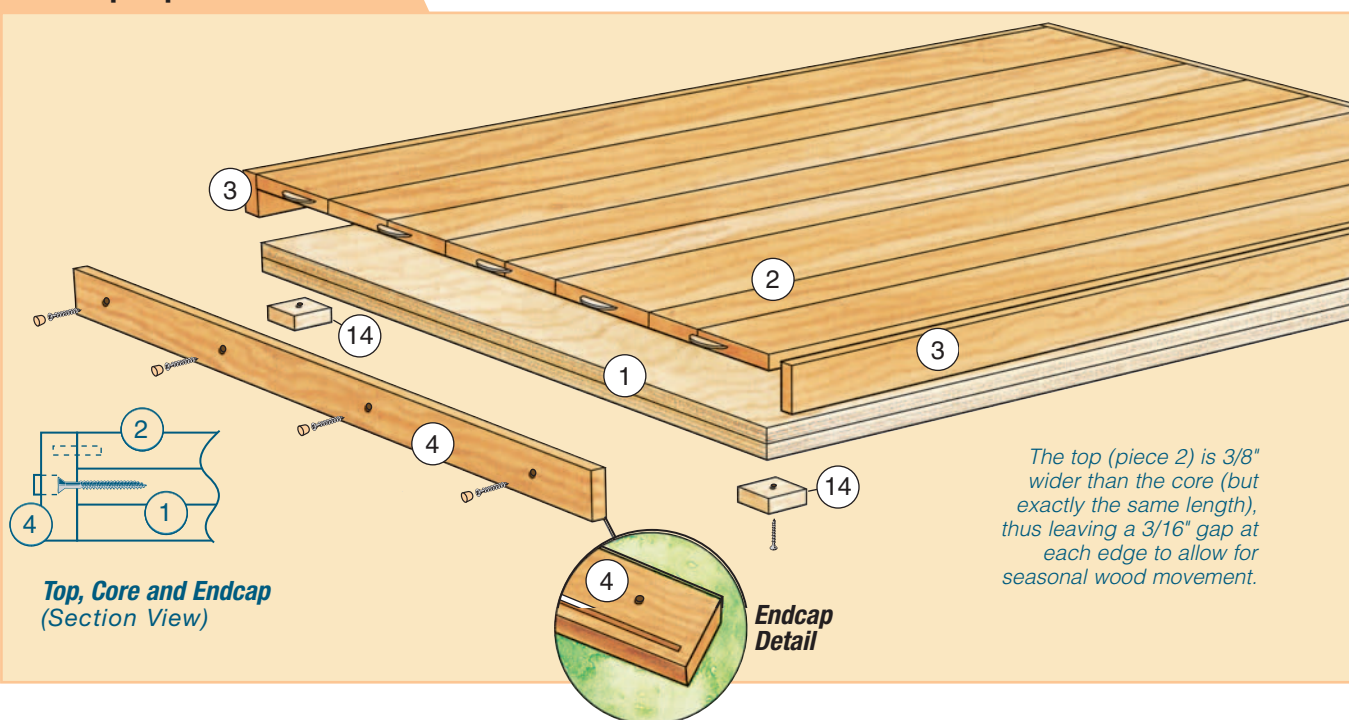
Now it's time to assemble the base. Rob glued and clamped it together on his work table with the legs pointed up in the

air. That helped him align the upper edges of all the dividers, front, back and sides evenly. If you plan to paint this unit as Rob did, a finish nail here and there is no cause for worry. You might want to hold off on attaching the feet until you get it into your kitchen: that way it will clear a 30" door. (Rob found this out the hard way!) Once the glue has cured, go ahead and glue the drawer slides in place to complete the base assembly.

MATERIAL LIST—BASE ASSEMBLY

		T x W x L
5	Leg Staves (8)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $3\frac{3}{4}$ " x 33"
6	Leg Fillers (8)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $2\frac{1}{4}$ " x 33"
7	Front and Back (2)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x 9" x $41\frac{1}{4}$ "
8	Sides (2)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x 9" x $23\frac{1}{4}$ "
9	Long Divider (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $7\frac{7}{8}$ " x $44\frac{1}{4}$ "
10	Short Dividers (6)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $8\frac{1}{4}$ " x $16\frac{1}{2}$ "
11	Bottom (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $16\frac{7}{8}$ " x 39"
12	Shelf (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x 30" x 48"
13	Shelf Trim (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 170"
14	Leg Blocks (12)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $2\frac{1}{4}$ " x $2\frac{1}{4}$ "
15	Drawer Slides (10)	$\frac{3}{8}$ " x $\frac{3}{4}$ " x $16\frac{1}{2}$ "

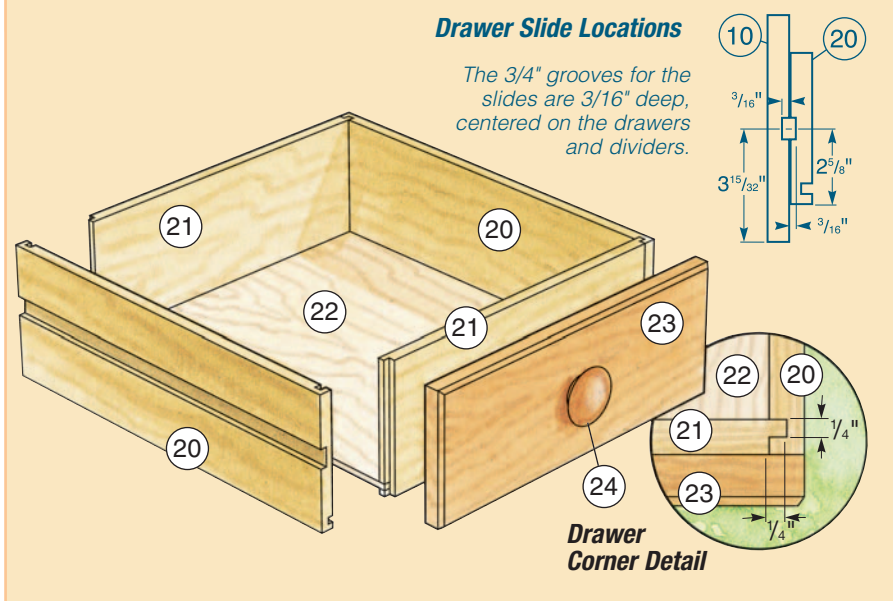
Top Exploded View



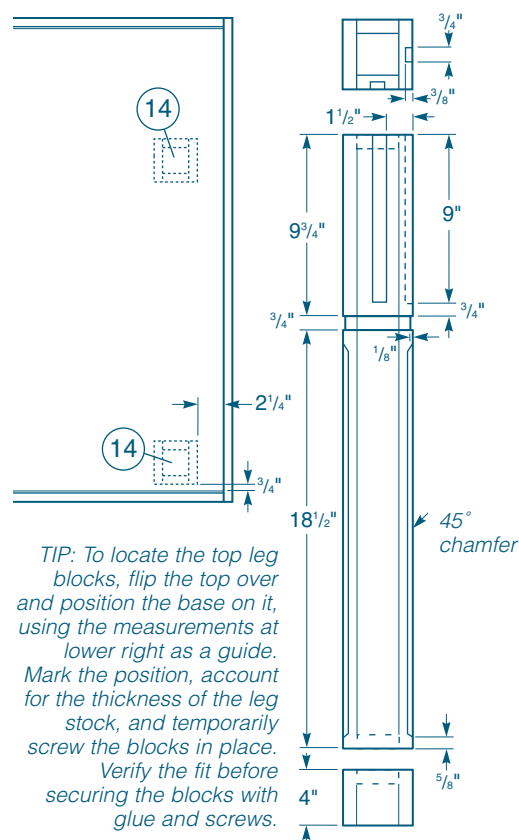
MATERIAL LIST—DRAWERS

		T x W x L
16	Drawer Sides (8)	$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $15\frac{3}{4}$ "
17	Drawer Fronts and Backs (8)	$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $4\frac{3}{4}$ "
18	Drawer Bottoms (4)	$\frac{1}{4}$ " x $4\frac{3}{4}$ " x $15\frac{1}{4}$ "
19	Drawer Faces (4)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ "
20	Large Drawer Sides (2)	$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $15\frac{3}{4}$ "
21	Large Drawer Front and Back (2)	$\frac{1}{2}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $13\frac{3}{4}$ "
22	Large Drawer Bottom (1)	$\frac{1}{4}$ " x $13\frac{1}{2}$ " x $15\frac{1}{4}$ "
23	Large Drawer Face (1)	$\frac{3}{4}$ " x $5\frac{1}{4}$ " x $13\frac{1}{2}$ "
24	Drawer Pulls (5)	2" Dia.
25	Spacers (5)	Trim to fit
26	Baskets (2)	Wicker, optional

Drawer Exploded View



Leg Block Locations (Bottom View, Core)

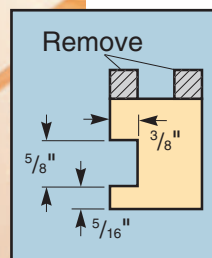


The Drawers and Last Details

The simple corner joints on these drawers call for a bit of production wood-working. Rob machined all the drawer parts (pieces 16 through 23) at once and took advantage of each setup on the table saw to do all similar pieces at the same time. Dry-fit the drawers to test their joinery and to see how they fit into the base. When you're satisfied, glue and clamp them up. then mount the drawer pulls (pieces 24) to

the drawer faces before you mount the faces to the drawers with screws.

With drawer construction behind you, sand them smooth and put two coats of clear finish on the drawers, inside and out.



If you choose to use hanging wicker baskets, you may need to re-machine their hangers to match the inset drawing at right.

Finishing Up

Use the drawer spacers (pieces 25) to adjust the drawer registration. Rob painted the base unit with white oil-based enamel so it would be easy to clean. As for the top, sand it to 600 grit, raise the grain with water and sand again with 600. Follow that up with several coats of butcher block oil.

Move the island to where you want to use it before you attach the top and feet (see notes on *Elevation Drawing*). Apply construction adhesive around the top of the legs to secure the top.

Add some sliding baskets to store spuds and onions down below, if you like. With that done, the only thing left is to screw the legs to the floor and get ready to start cooking. This project will delight your guests, no matter how good a chef you are.



Form the island's feet by cutting them off the glued-up legs. Most of the machining on this project can be completed on a good table saw.

Before laminating the top, establish straight, square edges by jointing the hard maple stock.

Quick Tip

Table Saw Extension

After many years of using a radial arm saw, one reader wrote in to tell us the immediate weakness of table saws when he finally bought one: whatever he sawed went off the end of the table onto the floor. His answer was to make a sliding 24" x 24" plywood extension table attached to square aluminum tubing, as shown in the sketch here. When it's not in use, this outfeed table slides out of its telescopic tubes and can be hung on a wall. For sawing heavy or extra-long stock, you may need to put a support under the table to prevent the tubing from bending. For greater rigidity, buy thicker-walled aluminum tubing, or switch to steel tubing instead.

