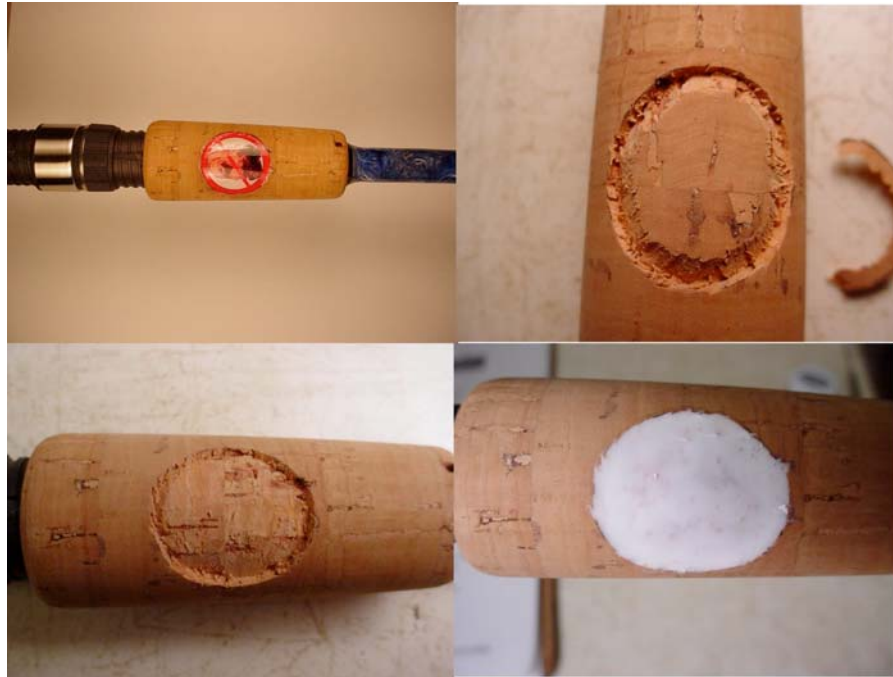


Cork Inlay Tutorial

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CUSTOM ROD BUILDERS GUILD

Doing cork inlay work requires a sharp Xacto knife or a suitable alternative. This job requires a bit of extra time and can't really be rushed. I'd like to find a better way of removing the material, such as a Dremel-like tool where the depth of cut could be set easily and the edge of the cork would be cut very sharply. I think that this would be difficult with the round surface of the cork grips. Barring that, the following way is how I've done my inlays up to this point.



COLLAGE OF PICTURES SHOWING SOME INLAY STEPS

The first thing that I did was to take the decal and, using a magnifying lens and good lighting, carefully trim the shape that I want with a scissor. I can come back later and trim the decal more closely for applying it. After doing this, I put the decal up to the cork foregrip (which already had U40 cork preserver on it) and traced around it with a fine tip permanent marker (no ink smearing on the cork!) or a pencil, leaving maybe an extra 1/8 to 1/4" of space around the edges of the decal. I found a spot on the cork where I wouldn't be cutting into any pit-filled areas as best as I could (areas with cork dust and glue). These spots tend to come out in one chunk when trying to cut or remove material there. Choosing a good, clean area in the cork for the border of the inlay is important. This only needs to be in the area of the border of the inlay where the cut will actually be made with the exacto knife or other.

See the top right hand picture in the collage above to help understand what I'm trying to say.

After that I used an Xacto knife with a fresh blade (under the magnifying lens again) and cut just outside of the marked line about 1/4" deep or deeper angled outwards. Using something sharper yet will help prevent any "rolling" of the cork in front of the blade; I've used a double-edged razor blade split in half and that works for the first surface cut pretty well, also. Also, cutting down just through the surface the first time around seems to work better and helps prevent tearing of the cork. Trying to do the whole depth of cut in one pass tends to bunch up the cork in front of the blade and tearing it.

This angling of the cut, when done, helps the inlay to stay in the cork - the cork would have to split all the way around for the inlay to come out of the cork. I wanted to be sure to go a bit deeper than the depth of the material I was going to remove later. A quarter of an inch depth will make sure that this happens.

I then carefully removed the cork inside of the cut to a depth of about 1/8" or a bit more, by slicing down at an angle towards that first cut around the outer edge. After removing this outer edge, I then worked from the middle out to the edges. I didn't gouge the cork in any way; I sliced it away carefully in thin, small bits!! I had better luck with the double-edged razor blade for most of this, also. These thin blades will bend and allow me to use them without mistakenly cutting outside of the inlay area on the surrounding cork. I was VERY careful to keep the inlay area as level as I could. The rod finish will cover minor imperfections here, though.

After removing the material to the depth I wanted, I masked off the cork around the edge of the inlay area with Scotch tape, again trimmed this under the lens with the knife, and then burnished the edges of the tape to get a good bond between it and the cork. I put the foregrip on a piece of scrap blank that would fit in my rod dryer, mixed up some rod finish and put just enough on to cover the very bottom of the inlay area in order to get a level, smooth surface for the decal to stick to. This finish can be colored with paint pigments such as Testor's or TAP (white in the following photo) to get the decal to "pop". The rod finish does tend to "suck in" to the porous cork (that's why it's so light!), so maybe put a bit extra on above and beyond being "just covered". Using two coats is OK as long as it's not filled up so far there's no room for the final coat of clear finish over the top. The idea is to get a SMOOTH surface for the decal or waterslide to be placed on.



WATERSLIDE DECAL MADE ON ALPS PRINTER

I let this spin until dry and waited at least 24 hours to put the decal carefully in place. If this is a normal decal (like a mermaid or a fish), not a waterslide, I've taken it outside and sprayed 3 thin coats of Krylon clear spray paint on it waiting a few minutes between coats for it to dry (again, not needed with waterslide decals). It dries fast and by sealing the decal, it keeps the edges of the decal from lifting when I put the final coat of rod finish over the top of the decal. I again put the second and sometimes, but not always, final coat of finish on thin making sure to have the whole decal covered. I then added bits more finish where needed until I was sure that the finish was level with the cork. I let this spin for 45 minutes to an hour, removed the Scotch tape and let it spin until dry. This timing would be dependent on the properties of the finish used, of course. It seems that doing the "filling" of the inlay area above the decal is best done in thin layers of finish verses one heavy coat of finish. I have done it both ways successfully, though.

The following picture shows where the whole foregrip is coated with finish.



WATERSLIDE DECAL MADE ON ALPS PRINTER

I then reamed the foregrip and glued it to the blank with the rest of the handle components as normal, making sure that the inlay is "straight with the world" on the rod.

Putter