

the good life



go on a course

Carving a wooden bowl

Imagine walking into a leafy woodland clearing, bounded by a stream, where upturned logs form a circle round a fire and a steaming kettle supplies a welcoming cup of tea. This was the scene that greeted me one sunny morning at Guy Mallinson's wooden bowl-carving course in Dorset – and provided the perfect setting in which to learn about wood and its workings.

Our bowls were to be hewn from locally sourced, unseasoned or 'green' wood and our tutors – Guy, an experienced furniture-maker, and James Verner, a skilled carpenter – taught us how to select the right size and type of log for the job. Once we'd made our choice, we set up on the workbench.

Guy explained what all the tools were and how to use them, as well as how to design

the size and shape of the bowl, taking into account the grain, colouring and nature of the wood. As the morning progressed, the story of woodcarving unfolded, while we peeled away the bark from our logs to reveal a smooth, moist surface – and the magical transformation began.

Guy and James moved around our group of eight, guiding us as we fumbled and struggled to use the unfamiliar tools. The experienced carvers raced ahead, providing perfect guidelines for the novices among us. After much debate, we made our first cuts.

The food lovers of the group didn't have to worry, as the important breaks of the day were strictly adhered to. Guy's talented wife, Boo, provided generous provisions mid-morning and for afternoon tea, and we



enjoyed a wonderful lunch beside the river.

By the end of the first day, we had all shaped our logs to form the rounded outline of a chunky bowl. On the second day, after much tapping and gouging, smoothing and sanding, the rough shapes were transformed into perfectly recognisable and usable bowls. HESTER PAGE

A two-day bowl-carving course costs £293.75, including materials and light lunches. Gift certificates for courses are available. For more information, contact Mallinson Ltd, Mangerton House, Mangerton, Bridport, Dorset DT6 3SG (01308 485111; www.mallinson.co.uk).

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