

A 15th Century chair you can build

(This article is reprinted from a book titled *Making Mediterranean Furniture*, by Jay Hedden and Monte Burch, with the kind permission of ARCO Publishing Co. of New York. John Chaisson did the drawings and I added the subheads—M.P.)

Based on a Savonarola chair from the late fifteenth century, this unusual piece of furniture is a real challenge to your craftsmanship. No upholstery is required for our version of the popular modern, "X-chair" only a cushion is required.

1. Draw and cut out the legs.

The first step is to make a pattern from the squared drawing of the leg. Cut 12 of these legs and try to keep them nearly the same. After you have them cut out, mark one for the location of the 3/8-in. threaded rod (available at hardware stores) which holds the legs together. Use it for a pattern and make up a jig into which each leg can be fitted for drilling. Use a 1/8-in. bit and drill all the legs; fit them on a piece of 1/8-in. wire to check that they are all reasonably close to having the hole in the same location. Redrill the legs to 3/8 in.

2. Drill spacers and glue legs

(Editor note: You may not want to glue if you want this chair to fold!)

Spacers between the legs are 1/4-in. slices from a 1-in. dowel. Assemble the legs on the threaded rod, run a nut on each end and place the assembly on a flat surface so the ends of the legs are flat and parallel. If all looks well, loosen the nuts, spread apart the spacers and legs and apply glue. Tighten up the nuts and clamp the assembly in this manner. Set it aside and cut the feet and arms.

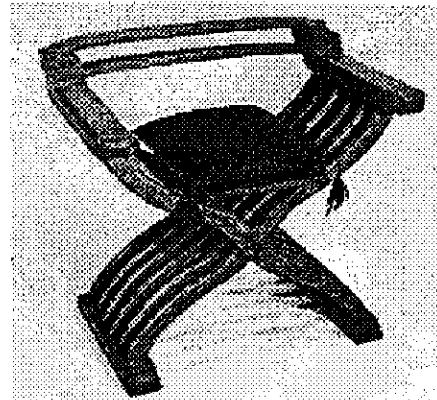
3. Shape and groove the feet and arms

The stock for these is 13/4 x 23/4-in. hardwood. We used oak truck stakes, which have this cross section. Cut 1-in. grooves 1 in. deep in each arm and foot to accept the leg ends. Note that the groove in one arm and one leg is farther from the front end by the thickness of a leg and spacer. Shape the front end of the feet, and the front end and back of the arms. The arms are cut at a 30-deg. angle, with a 5-in. block also cut at that angle and glued and screwed to each arm.

The screws are set in counterbored holes, which are fitted with plugs.

4. Glue the legs to the feet

Set the leg assembly into the feet, make sure the front ends of the feet are square across, then



cut and fit blocks between the legs to fit in the grooves in the feet. Use plenty of glue to hold these, but have a damp cloth handy to wipe off excess. Allow this to stand at least overnight.

5. Attach the arms

Invert the assembly and attach the arms, using spacer blocks as with the feet: When the glue has set, drive screws down through the arms into every other leg. Make counterbored holes and again use plugs cut from the same hardwood as used for the rest of the chair.

6. Make the chair back

(Again you may want to make this removable to keep your chair portable)

The back shown is just two simple curves cut from 1-in. hardwood. You can vary this design by fitting a shaped plywood back inside these curved members or cutting kerfs in the stock so it bends easily—or you can dream up any number of such designs to individualize your own chair.

7. Install the seat

(Make the seat removable if you want the chair to fold.)

The seat is a rectangle of 1-in. hardwood, with the edges rounded to match the curves of the legs. Cleats are shaped to fit inside the legs, with the upper surfaces horizontal, to support this seat which is glued and screwed to the cleats. A loose cushion can be used for comfort.

MATERIALS LIST

Feet and arms, oak truck stakes, 1-3/4" X 2-3/4" x 60": 2 required. Legs, 1-in. hardwood, 1-1/2" x 34" (approx.): 12 required. Seat, back, 1-in. hardwood 1 x 4's, about 6 ft. required. Threaded steel rod, 3/8" dia. x 36" (cut to length) with 2 nuts.

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Plans:

