

Sawdust in the Soup

Get your daily fiber requirements with just one crosscut.

The ad read: “3 bdrms, 1½ baths, needs TLC.” More than a fixer-upper, this house was a down-and-outer of the first degree. My mom, my son and I needed something cheap. The price was right. As derelict as the rest of the house was, the kitchen was the *pièce de résistance*. It was the knotty pine so popular in the 1960s. Mostly rotted through, black with grease and grime, and home to a thriving population of cockroaches. Now I am not the squeamish sort but that kitchen made even my intrepid soul cringe. My son Rob, made of sterner stuff than I (and soon to escape to college) stepped to the plate. Armed with a crowbar, respirator mask and a tetanus booster, he went to work. The kitchen was gutted to the studs. As there was no other place for my woodworking tools, I claimed this area as my own.

Three long years were spent on the necessity of home repairs. The frog prince (aka the kitchen) slowly metamorphosed into a thing of beauty. But the tools still had no place to call their own. And still there were scads of projects from kayaks to living room furniture that had to be built . . .

You know, I’m still not exactly sure what became of my mother’s good sense and balanced judgment. I don’t think it was my router bits coexisting peacefully in the drawer with the cooking utensils. Nor was it finding my handsaws wrapped in her table linens to protect their fine edges, or storing the sandpaper in the napkin holder to keep the grits organized.

No. On reflection I think it was the day she found sawdust floating on her soup. It wasn’t much, mind you. More of a garnish really. Somehow my observation that the

extra fiber would be good for her didn’t seem to help. She became totally unreasonable. Really worked up over it. She wanted the tools out of the kitchen. Yesterday.

We woodworkers are a creative lot and the solution came quickly to me. I decided to use my tools as furniture in the living room. My mom’s soup would be safe. Two birds, one stone. Domestic harmony once again.

My floor-model drill press does an admirable job as an end table beside the couch. The table was lowered to a comfortable height and it’s a great place to rest cold drinks. It even has a built-in reading lamp. Care must be taken, however, that condensation doesn’t leave rust rings on the cast-iron surface.

The Pro-Tech benchtop table saw was a little more challenging. It was rehabbed as a library desk. The school-bus yellow does clash somewhat with the overall color

by Kate McDonald

Kate recently moved to West Virginia where she’s contemplating a new career as an interior designer.

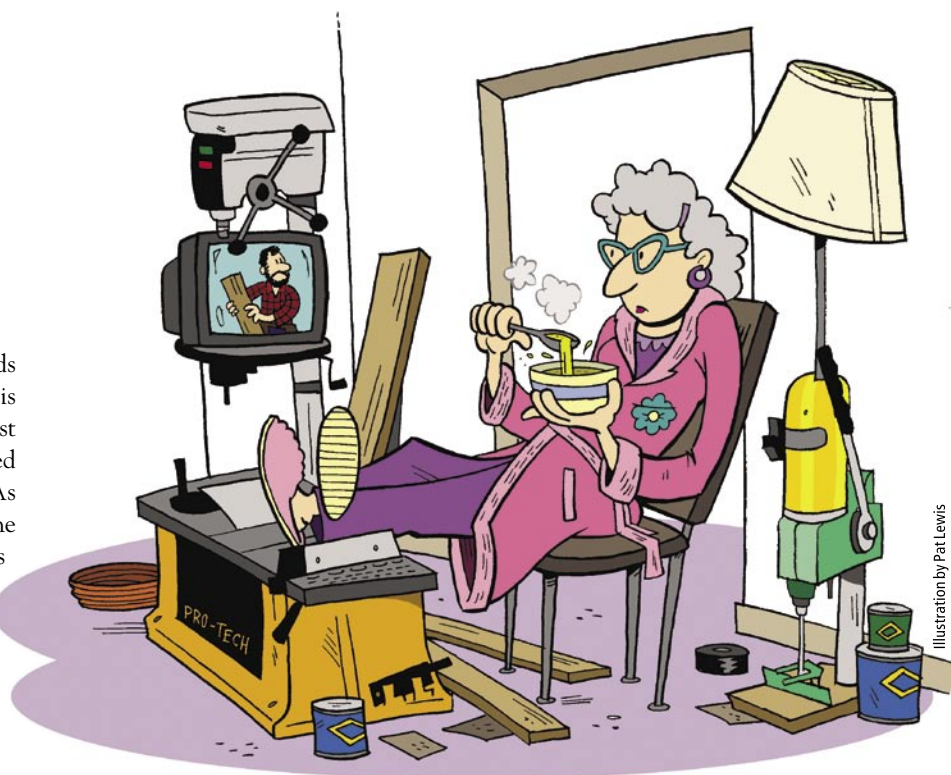


Illustration by Pat Lewis

scheme. To counter this, the Woodtek mortiser was rewired into a lamp. Combining its bright green body with the cheerful yellow knobs helped to tie in the golden yellow of the saw. Now the colors vibrate and bring life to the otherwise unimaginative room.

It was most difficult finding a schizophrenic new self for the radial arm saw. This is my favorite machine. And while it doesn’t fetch my slippers for me at the end of the day, it has provided good company throughout countless projects. It made much more sense, I patiently explained to my mother, to keep this tool in the kitchen.

I won this fight because experience quickly proved: No matter how dusty the soup, it is still easier to vacuum the dishes than to clean the living-room upholstery.

So now when Rob brings his buddies home from college, I am thrilled with their speechlessness as they admire our charming décor. My son recommends they try the soup *du jour*. He informs them they can meet their daily fiber requirements in just one bowlful. **PW**