

How It's Made: Wood Furniture

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Many factors come into play when buying wood furniture. These include the cost, the colour, the quality and of course the wood.

There are three woods when it comes to furniture. They are solid wood, Medium Density Fibreboard (MDF), and plywood.

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Believe it or not there are occasions when MDF may be the better option with wood furniture. But there is always a time to invest in high-quality hardwood furniture. The question is: what is right when?

Solid Wood Furniture

Solid wood describes a natural resource. It is a material that does not go through a manufacturing process, unlike MDF.

The two main types are hardwood and softwood. Hardwood is, as you would expect, the more hard-wearing, long-lasting and durable. The trees that produce hardwood grow over a long period of time. They also produce denser wood furniture. Generally, hardwoods are deeper in tone than their softwood counterparts. Hardwoods used to make high-quality furniture include Ash, Birch, Cherry, Maple, Oak and Walnut. The [Gazzda Fawn Sideboard](#), for example, is all-oak piece that brings nature and style into any space. It stands out with fluid lines and smooth surfaces. Softwoods are much less compacted and unable to endure as much as hardwoods. As a result softwoods are often used as backing or to line the insides of wood furniture. The softwoods found in wood furniture include Acacia, Pine, Poplar, and Rubberwood.

Natural Characteristics of Wood Furniture

Because solid wood is a living material, its appearance will not be uniform. This is one of the beauties of hardwood furniture. The marks, stains, and colours all tell how a particular tree adapted to its environment.

A good example of the beauty of solid wood furniture is [Fritz Hansen's Grand Prix Chair with Wood Legs](#). The award-winning piece is one of the finest examples of modern Danish design. Fritz Hansen produces it under licence. The firm uses simple tools, quality materials and time-honoured techniques.

All natural wood furniture, but particularly hardwood furniture, is long-lasting. This improves when it's taken good care of. These pieces often end up as heirlooms. Extending the longevity of solid wood furniture is easy with refinishing and sanding.

MDF

MDF describes a wood composite. Made with leftover hardwood or softwood. The materials become panels with the application of intense heat and pressure. MDF can be quite sturdy and dense. This makes it almost impossible to cut with a table saw.

People often confuse MDF with chipboard. Chipboard is much more flimsy and made with large wood chips and sawdust. These are then bound together with resin and glue. It is much less expensive, but it is not durable and can be prone to damage.



MDF's strength and density mean it doesn't warp with heat. This makes it good for housing anything electronic that gives off a high temperature.

Bookcase shelves are often made with MDF. It can hold weight and prevents warping. A lot of dressers contain MDF on their sides. It not only helps mitigate cost but its durability ensures stability.

MDF can make furniture much heavier than hardwood versions. MDF is much denser than plywood. Thus, it can be a solid substitute for most common plywood building applications. What needs to be borne in mind with MDF furniture is that finishes can include laminate, veneer and paint. MDF is stiff, dense, and flat, without knots, voids, or grain. A replacement for plywood and chip board, there's no risk of tear out, and it delivers sharp edges upon cutting.

Plywood

Plywood is an engineered wood. Formed with layers of wood glued together in alternating sections.

Plywood is available in both hard and softwoods. This affects their comparative durability. It also comes in various numbers of layers, usually between three and nine. The more layers, the stronger the plywood, but this also affects the cost.

The best quality plywood comes from kiln-dried hardwood. This helps keep its shape and prevents warping. Plywood's benefit is that it woodworkers can be shape and curve it for specific uses.

Veneers

Veneers are thin strips of hardwood. These are cut and glued to a panel. Made of inexpensive wood, like chipboard, or MDF. The woodcutters slice and peel a tree trunk or cut out a flitch (a large rectangular block) to make a veneer layer. To achieve the desired grains and figures the cuts to a tree's growth rings happens at different angles.



The aim is to produce flat panels for use in finishing furniture and other wood products. It enables cabinetmakers to finish furniture with another material that is exotic or expensive.

There are different qualities of veneer. Even the most expensive tend to be less pricey than hardwood. They are thin pieces of premium wood laid over manufactured wood.

This single-layer provides the look of hardwood grains, but the cost is lower. A major drawback of veneer is that it limits the number of times your furniture can be refinished. This is why it's not recommended on tables. It's important if you do choose veneer that it's an actual piece of hardwood.

Making The Wood Furniture Choice



Deciding between furniture made with MDF or hardwood often comes down to cost, except for those applications where MDF stands out.

Purchasing a piece of hardwood furniture is not just about paying for high-quality material. It's also about the value of the hand-labour, the precision, and the thoughtfulness that has gone into making the piece.

It's important when buying quality furniture to do the research. The more information you glean, the less likely you are to be blindsided when it arrives.

Solid wood is timber that has been harvested and is then fashioned into solid pieces. MDF and Plywood are made by pressing together layers of wood or gluing wood fibres with wax and resin.

MDF, Plywood, and veneers are comparatively cost-effective and sometimes more practical, but solid wood furniture is matchless especially when it comes to its beauty, its durability, and its longevity.