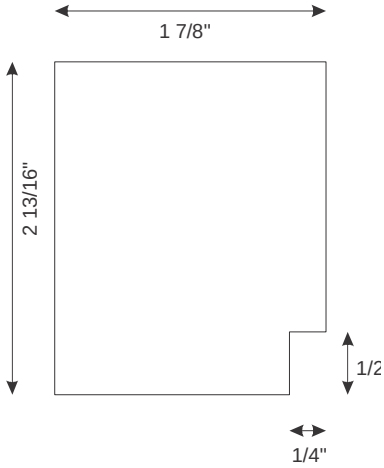
Building Kitchen Cupboards

Building cupboards is like building any other piece of "case" furniture. Basically, it's a box with a drawer/door on the front. These are non-working drawers/doors, and are "just for looks". Any piece of furniture that incorporates a box can be built using these techniques: a cabinet, a wardrobe, a desk, a file cabinet, a bedside table, etc. When the back cannot be seen, foam core makes a good back, since it provides a stable surface for gluing the other pieces onto. If the back will be visible, use a thicker piece of wood.

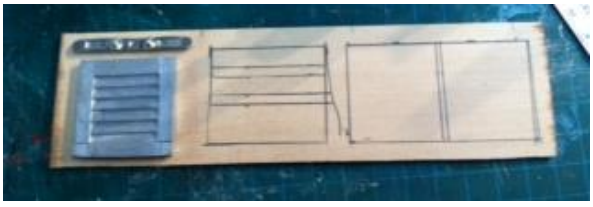
Bottom Cupboard

1. Starting with the bottom cupboard, cut a piece of foam core that is 2 13/16 inches tall and the length of your cupboard minus 1/8 inch. Since the wood sides of the cupboard are glued onto the foam core, this measurement should allow for the width of the two wooden sides.

2. NOTE: If you are planning to stain your cupboards, sand and stain each piece of basswood as it is cut. If you are planning to paint your cupboards, sand each piece as it is cut, then paint after assembly.



3. Cut two sides according to the pattern to the right from the basswood. Using a gluing jig, glue the two sides of the foam core (which becomes the back of your lower cabinet), with the indents for the kick plate to the front. Allow to dry thoroughly. Cut one piece of basswood that is 1/2" by the length of your cupboard. Glue to the front of the kick plate as a spacer, and to keep your cupboard sides rigid.



4. While the glue is drying, cut another piece that is 2 5/16" tall by the length of your cupboard. This will become the front of your lower cupboard. Following your plan, and using a pencil, lightly draw the location of any drawers, cupboards, etc. onto the front.

5. Cut individual pieces of basswood for each drawer front or cupboard. Using a sanding block, round all four edges of each door/drawer front.

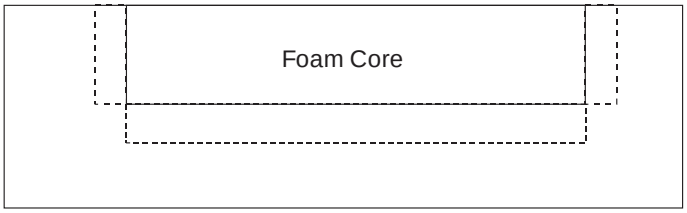
6. In each drawer/cupboard, drill a small hole (for a single door/drawer pull) or two holes if you will be using a staple for the pull. You may want to brighten up the staple with your Krylon pen prior to fastening it to the cupboard. Test fit your pull in the hole, and cut flush with the back of the door when in the correct position. Place a small amount of glue in the hole and fasten your pulls in place. Clamp and set aside till dry.

7. Then, glue the finished lower cupboard front to the cupboard carcass made in step 3. Set aside to dry.

Counter Top

8. Cut a piece of foam core 2" wide and the length of your lower cupboard. Choose the placement for your sink, and, using your sink as a template, cut a hole in the foam core in which to insert your sink.

9. Place the foam core on the reverse side of the sheet of "arborite" paper, lining up the foam core with one edge of the paper, and centering it as shown in the diagram below.



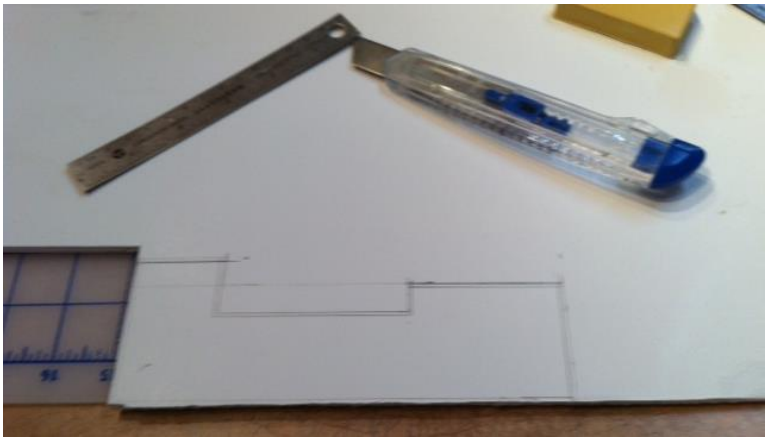
Measure 1/4 inch on three sides of the foam core, as shown above.

10. Cut out and turn over to the good side of the paper. Lightly score the "arborite" paper to form flaps on three sides of the paper. Glue in place over the foam core. When the glue is dry, and using a new blade in your X-Acto knife, cut the arborite paper out of the hole for the sink.

Upper Cupboards

11. Standard upper cupboards are 12 inches deep and can be as wide and as high as you wish.

12. On a piece of foam core, draw the template (or templates, depending on whether your upper cupboards are contiguous or separated) for your upper cupboards, according to your plan. You can make one cupboard per section, then join them together when they are installed (the real world approach) or you can make them all in one piece (my preferred approach). Then, draw an identical shape 1/16" inside the first drawing. These interior lines are your cutting lines.



13. Cut sufficient pieces of basswood 1" deep and the appropriate length for the bottoms of the cupboards. These will be glued in place first, and then all other measurements will be taken after these are in place. Glue the bottoms in place, making sure that they are attached at a right angle, and put in a gluing jig to dry while preparing the cupboard tops and sides.

14. Next cut the top of the cupboard(s), 1" deep and the length of the overall top cupboard. The top fits on top of the foam core, and inside the sides. Hold in place with clamps or masking tape while measuring the sides. DO NOT GLUE YET.

15. Cut the cupboard sides next. They should be 1" deep and the height should be measured from the bottom of the cupboard bottom to the top of the cupboard top. Once the sides are cut and stained, glue the cupboard tops in place, immediately followed by the cupboard sides. Set this cupboard assembly aside to dry thoroughly, making sure that all corners are square.

16. Now, measure the assembly and cut your cupboard front. Stain if required. Then, on the back, draw where the cupboard doors are going to go, and measure the sizes needed.

Cut the doors, turn the front over, and glue the doors in place on the stained side, clamping until dry.

17. Once the doors are firmly glued in place, using your pin vise, drill holes for your door handles, place a small dot of glue in each hole, and insert handles.

18. Finally, glue cupboard front(s), to the completed back assembly. Clamp or tape until dry.

19. You're done. Enjoy your new kitchen.

Tools/Supplies Required:

DON'T FORGET YOUR PLAN!

- Foam Core
- Basswood Sheets (my favorite thickness for cupboard sides/fronts is 1/16” thick – can be purchased at Michaels)
- Various findings for cupboard handles
- "Arborite" or marbleized paper for counter tops
- Gluing Jig
- 12" metal, foam-backed ruler
- Self-healing cutting mat
- X-Acto or utility knife with extra blades
- Tacky Glue and/or wood glue
- Stain pen or paint in appropriate colour for your cupboards
- Gold or silver Krylon or Pilot pen (for colouring door handles, etc.)
- Pin vise (hand-held drill)
- Wire cutters
- Tweezers
- Sanding block
- Small clamps
- Masking tape