



CALABASHES

GHWG Presentation
January 2010

Origin

- A Calabash is a gourd
- They grow in many different shapes and sizes
- A traditional use in many countries is to dry them and use them for containers.



The Hawaiian Calabash



- In early Hawaiian society the calabash was carved using stone and coral tools. Shapes for the cooking pots were based on coconuts and gourds
- Only Kings had wooden ones and the gourds were left for the “commoners”

Lathes came to Hawaii in the 1830's, but it wasn't until the 1870's that lathe turned calabashes became common. This coincided with the increasing scarcity of kou trees as well as the Hawaiian calabash craftsman. Thereafter, a variety of non-traditional forms made their appearance, most notably calabashes with footed pedestals and knobbed covers. These were made more for display than functional use.

The earlier traditional calabash soon became a highly prized collector item.

The calabash shape as a turned object has certain traditional restrictions with regards to proportions and curves. Purists try to stay true to the earlier craftsman's interpretation of forms taken from coconuts and gourds.

Beginning primarily as a container to be used for cooking and food presentation the form has now become a lot more generic.

Now mainly decorative, they allow the turner a degree of flexibility in shape and woods used, and can be simple or challenging.

Some samples



More samples



Traditional and Modern



Choices in materials

- Any wood. Preferably void free.
- Wet or dry. Wet allows exploration of warping.
- Grain orientation can be any way you choose. Allows artistic elements to be really varied.
- Natural edges work.
- Size is anything you choose.

The Form



- Always a round bottom. A lei was used to hold the pot in a suitable position.
- Opening smaller than the widest part.
- A small straight graduation from sides to top.
- Thin.
- Smooth curves and transitions

Variations



Variations



Favourites



Big Ones

