SOFTWARE & TECH

How To Make A Lazy Susan

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Introduction: The Timeless Appeal of a DIY Lazy Susan

Have you ever found yourself reaching across the dinner table for the salt, only to ask someone to pass it? Or struggled to find the right spice jar wedged in the back of a crowded cupboard? The solution is both simple and elegant: a Lazy Susan. This rotating tray, named after the mythical lazy servant who never had to get up, is an ingenious invention that adds convenience to kitchens, dining tables, and workspaces. Instead of buying an expensive pre-made one, learning **how to make a Lazy Susan**yourself is a satisfying weekend project that yields a custom, durable, and beautiful result. Whether you are a seasoned woodworker or a complete beginner, building your own rotating tray allows you to choose the exact size, wood type, and finish to match your home. In this comprehensive guide, we will walk you through every step, from selecting materials to installing the bearing, so you can create a functional piece of furniture that impresses guests and makes daily life easier.

What Is a Lazy Susan and Why Build One?

A Lazy Susan is a revolving tray placed on a table, in a cabinet, or on a countertop to allow easy access to items. It typically consists of two circular or rectangular platforms separated by a rotating bearing mechanism. The bottom platform remains stationary, while the top spins freely. While you can purchase one from any home goods store, DIY versions offer superior quality, custom sizing, and a personal touch. Building one also saves money and provides the satisfaction of creating something useful. Additionally, you can adapt the design—making a small one for condiments, a large one for a pantry, or a square one for a corner cabinet. Understanding **how to make a Lazy Susan**gives you the flexibility to solve storage problems in your home with a custom solution.

Materials and Tools You Will Need

Before diving into the construction, gather your supplies. The exact quantities depend on the size you choose, but the following list covers a standard 12-inch diameter round Lazy Susan.

Materials

- Wood for the top and bottom platforms: ¾-inch plywood or hardwood (oak, maple, or birch) is ideal. For a 12-inch circle, you need two squares at least 13x13 inches.
- Lazy Susan bearing: A heavy-duty rotating bearing kit available at hardware stores or online. Choose one rated for the weight you intend to place on it (e.g., 50–100 lbs).
- Wood glue: Carpenter’s glue for a strong bond.
- Wood screws: ¾-inch flat head screws for attaching the bearing and any edging.
- Sandpaper: 80, 120, and 220 grit for smoothing.
- Finish: Polyurethane, varnish, or mineral oil depending on use (food-safe if for dining).
- Optional: Decorative edge banding, felt pads for the bottom base, or a non-slip liner on top.

Tools

- Jigsaw, bandsaw, or router with a circle-cutting jig: To cut the circles.
- Drill with drill bits and screwdriver bit.
- Clamps.
- Measuring tape and compass or string for marking circles.
- Safety gear: Safety glasses and dust mask.

Step-by-Step Guide: How To Make A Lazy Susan

Now that you have your materials, follow these detailed steps to create a smooth-spinning Lazy Susan. The process is straightforward, but attention to detail ensures a wobble-free rotation.

Step 1: Prepare the Wood Platforms

Start by cutting two identical circles or squares. For a round Lazy Susan, draw a circle on your plywood using a compass or a string method. For a square or rectangle, simply mark the dimensions with a straight edge. Use a jigsaw to cut along the line, staying just outside the mark. Clamp the wood securely to avoid vibration. Once both pieces are cut, stack them and sand the edges together to ensure they match perfectly. If you prefer a square tray, the same process applies—just cut two squares of equal size.

Step 2: Sand and Smooth All Surfaces

Sand both platforms with 80-grit paper to remove rough edges and saw marks. Then progress to 120 grit, and finally 220 grit for a silky finish. Pay special attention to the top surface and the edges that will be visible. If you use hardwood, consider rounding over the top edge with a router or by hand sanding for a more comfortable feel. For food-grade applications, ensure no splinters remain.

Step 3: Apply the Finish

Before assembling the bearing, apply your chosen finish to both sides and the edges of each platform. This protects the wood from moisture and stains. For a dining table lazy Susan, use a food-safe mineral oil or beeswax. For a kitchen cabinet, polyurethane provides a durable, easy-clean surface. Apply at least two coats, sanding lightly with 220 grit between coats. Let the finish cure completely—typically 24 hours.

Step 4: Locate and Mark the Center

Place the bearing in the center of the bottom platform (the one that will remain stationary). Use a ruler to find the midpoint of the platform and mark it. Most bearings have a pre-drilled center hole; align it with your mark. For square or rectangular trays, the bearing should be centered precisely to ensure balanced spinning. If your bearing is a disc without a hole, mark the screw holes lightly with a pencil.

Step 5: Attach the Bearing to the Bottom Platform

Secure the bearing to the bottom platform using the screws provided in the kit. Typically, you screw through the bearing into the wood. Use a drill to create pilot holes to prevent splitting the wood. Tighten screws firmly but not overtightened—this could warp the bearing base. Ensure the bearing ring rotates freely after installation; if it binds, adjust the screws slightly.

Step 6: Attach the Top Platform to the Bearing

Now, place the top platform upside down on a flat work surface. Position the bottom platform (with the bearing attached) upside down on top of the top platform so that the bearing is sandwiched between them. Align the edges carefully. Then, from the underside of the top platform (which is facing up), screw into the bearing's upper ring. Use the same screw pattern as the bottom. Be careful not to screw through the top surface. After all screws are in place, flip the assembly over. You should now have a complete Lazy Susan that spins smoothly.

Step 7: Test and Adjust

Spin the top platform by hand. It should rotate with minimal friction and no wobble. If you feel resistance, check that all screws are seated flush and that the bearing is not warped. If the tray wobbles, the bearing may not be perfectly centered; you can loosen screws and adjust slightly. Once you are satisfied, add felt pads to the bottom of the stationary platform to protect your table or cabinet surface.

Variations: Different Shapes, Sizes, and Uses

Now that you know the basic method for **how to make a Lazy Susan**, you can adapt it to various needs. Here are a few popular variations:

Corner Cabinet Lazy Susan

For deep corner cabinets, cut the platforms into a pie shape or two half-circles that fit the cabinet's L-shaped doors. Use a heavy-duty bearing to support heavier items like pots and pans. You can also build a tiered version with a central post and two rotating shelves.

Tabletop or Dining Lazy Susan

Make it from a high quality hardwood like walnut or cherry. Keep the diameter between 12 and 18 inches so it does not dominate the table. Add a raised lip on the top platform to prevent dishes from sliding off. A clear satin finish works well here.

Spice Rack Lazy Susan

Create a small, compact version (6–8 inches) for inside a cupboard. Use thin plywood and a small bearing. Add dividers on the top platform to keep spice bottles organized. This is a perfect project for using scrap wood.

Rectangular or Oval Lazy Susan

Round is classic, but rectangular lazy susans are excellent for serving platters or storing long items. The same bearing works; just ensure the center of gravity is over the bearing. Build a rectangular frame and attach a thin plywood top. The construction steps remain the same.

Tips for a Professional Finish and Long-Lasting Performance

To make your DIY Lazy Susan look store-bought and last for years, keep these tips in mind:

- Weight capacity: Choose a bearing that supports at least 50 pounds more than your intended load. Heavier items require a metal bearing, not plastic.
- Non-slip surface: Apply a cabinet liner or cork sheet to the top platform to keep items from sliding during rotation.
- Edge detailing: Use a router with a roundover bit or apply iron-on edge banding to hide plywood layers.
- Balancing: For rectangular trays, position the bearing slightly closer to the heavier side? No—always center it. If the tray tilts, redistribute items on top.
- Maintenance: Occasionally tighten the screws and apply a drop of lightweight oil to the bearing if it becomes stiff. Avoid water damage by sealing the wood thoroughly.

Common Mistakes to Avoid

Even experienced DIYers can run into issues. Here are pitfalls to sidestep when learning **how to make a Lazy Susan**:

- Using wood that is too thin: A ½-inch plywood may warp under weight. Stick to ¾-inch or thicker for stability.
- Screwing through the top surface: Always screw from the underside. Countersink screws so they are flush

with the wood.

- Off-center bearing: This causes wobbling. Always measure twice. For circular trays, use a compass to find the exact center.
- Ignoring finish on the bottom: The bottom stationary plate also needs protection, especially if it rests on a table that may get wet.
- Rushing the glue/screw cure: Let glue and finish dry fully before using the tray. A premature load can cause delamination.

Conclusion: Enjoy Your Handcrafted Rotating Tray

Building your own Lazy Susan is a rewarding project that combines practicality with craftsmanship. You have now learned **how to make a Lazy Susan**from scratch, including material selection, cutting, finishing, and bearing installation. With this knowledge, you can produce a custom rotating tray that perfectly fits your home—whether for the dining table, a kitchen cabinet, or a craft room. Not only will you save money, but you will also gain a piece that reflects your personal style and effort. As you spin your new creation, you will appreciate the simplicity and genius of the design. So gather your tools, choose your wood, and get started on a project that will make daily life a little easier and a lot more organized.

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