



Custom Cabinets: An Inside Look

A cabinetmaker offers smart construction details for the most common types of cabinets

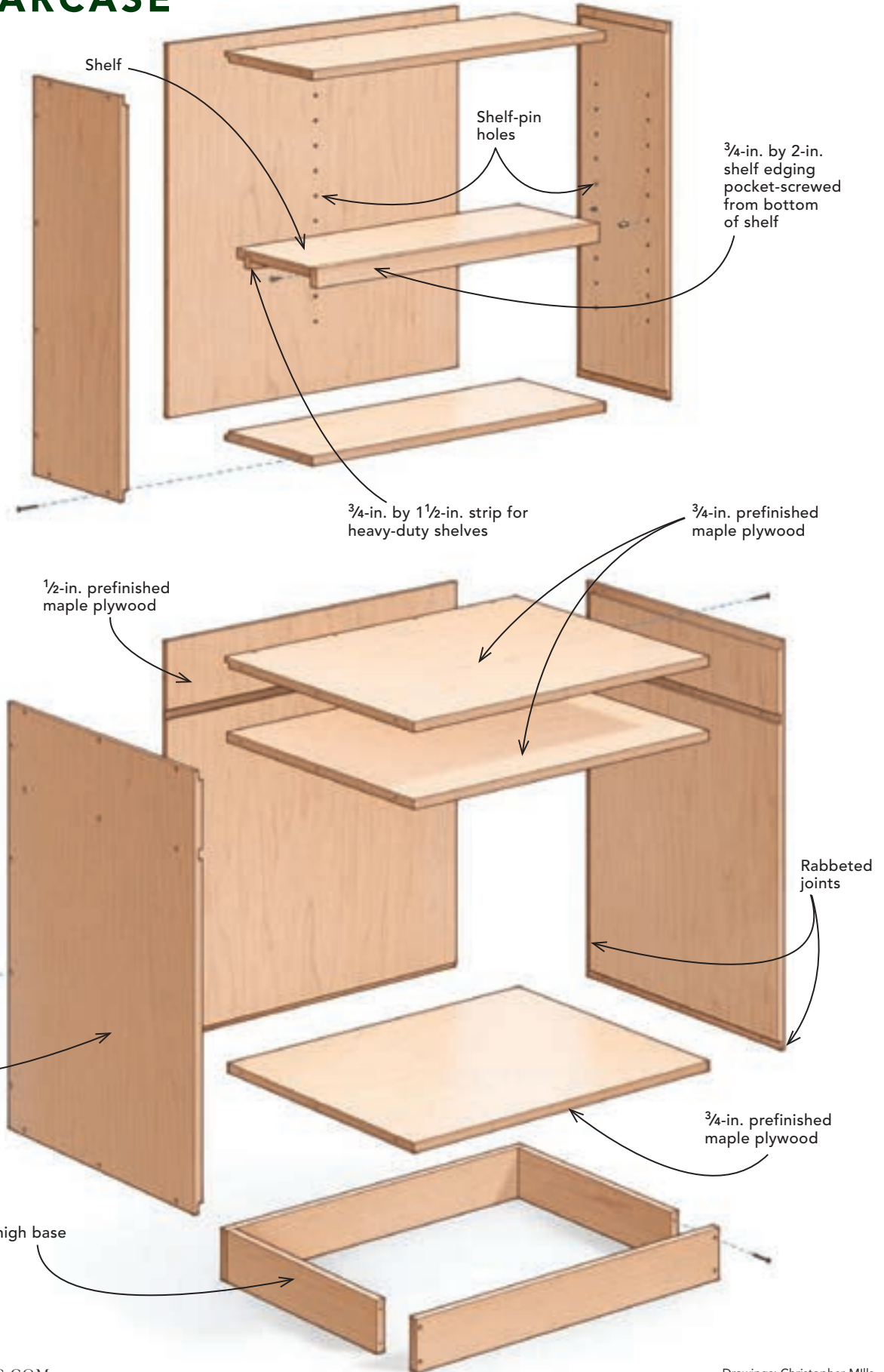
BY BRENT BENNER

Designers normally don't provide construction details beyond elevation drawings for kitchen cabinets. As a cabinet builder, it's my job to fill in the details. Regardless of style, the cabinet boxes, or carcases, are similar. The differences in how I build each style of cabinet lie in how the doors and drawers relate to the frames. Euro-style cabinets have no face frames; the doors and drawers cover the carcase edges. Overlay and inset cabinets have traditional face frames, but the former's doors and drawers overlay the cabinet faces, while the latter's are inset within the faces. □

Brent Benner owns The Roxbury Cabinet Company in Roxbury, Conn. Photos by Brian Vanden Brink, except where noted.

ALL CABINETS START WITH A BASIC CARCASE

All styles of cabinets have carcasses made of similar materials and joinery. The base cabinet carcasses are sized to sit on a 4-in.-high base, usually made from plywood scrap and recessed from the front of the cabinets to create a toe space. This frame is leveled so the cabinet carcasses can be placed on it without having to fuss with each one. I use prefinished maple plywood for all carcass parts. For cabinets wider than 3 ft., a row of holes for shelf pins is drilled down the center of the back. Heavier-duty shelves get a 3/4-in. by 1 1/2-in. hardwood strip set in a dado along the back edge for additional support.



EURO-STYLE CABINETS

Euro-style cabinets lend themselves to sleek, modern decor. The doors hang from Euro hinges, which allow for adjustment in several directions to simplify fitting the doors with even gaps between them. Euro cabinets save labor and material costs by eliminating the face frame. The sides of Euro cabinets screw to each other with no space between, so they offer the most interior space of any cabinet style.



Drawer slide
screwed to side

Doors and drawer fronts
lap plywood edges

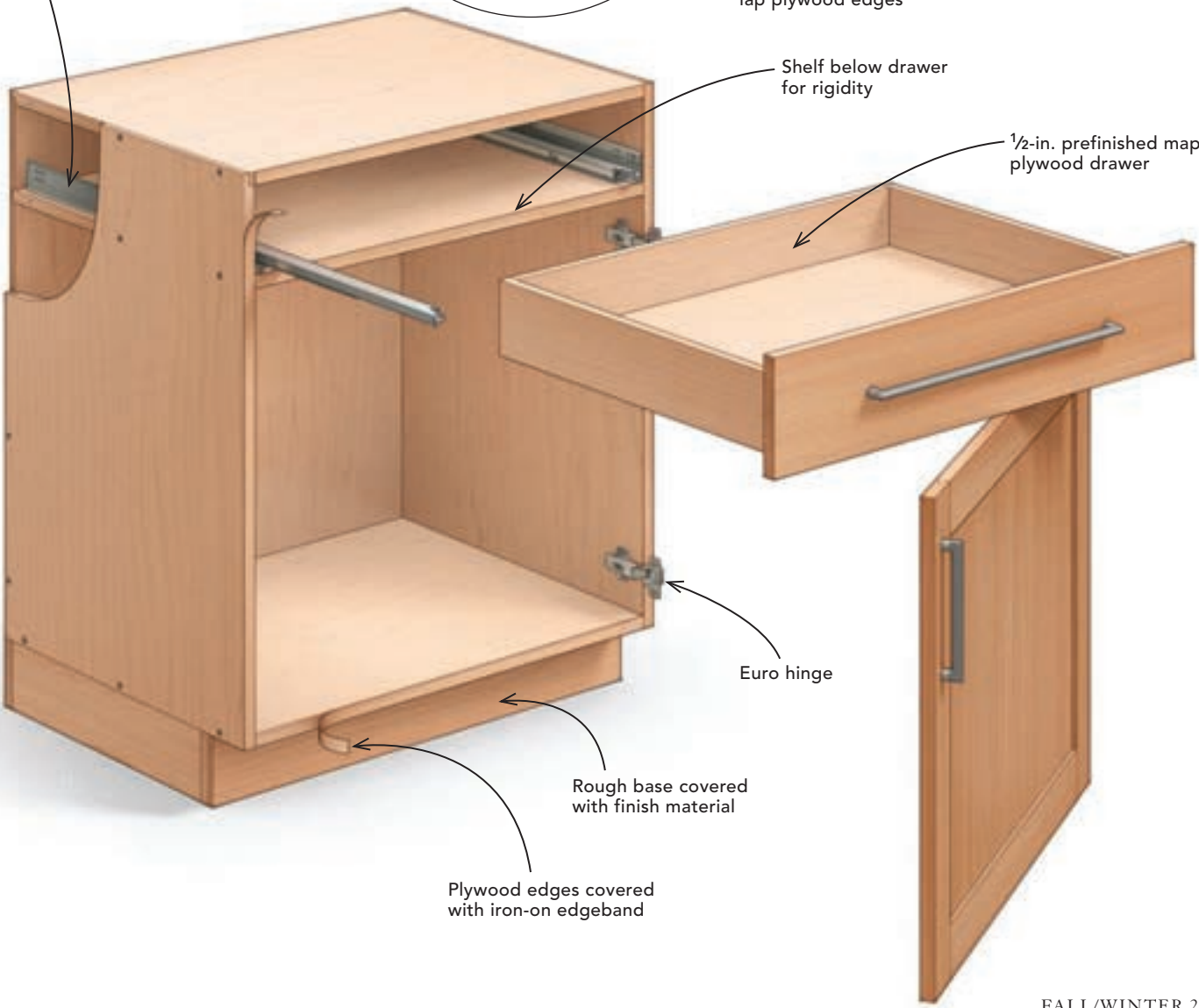
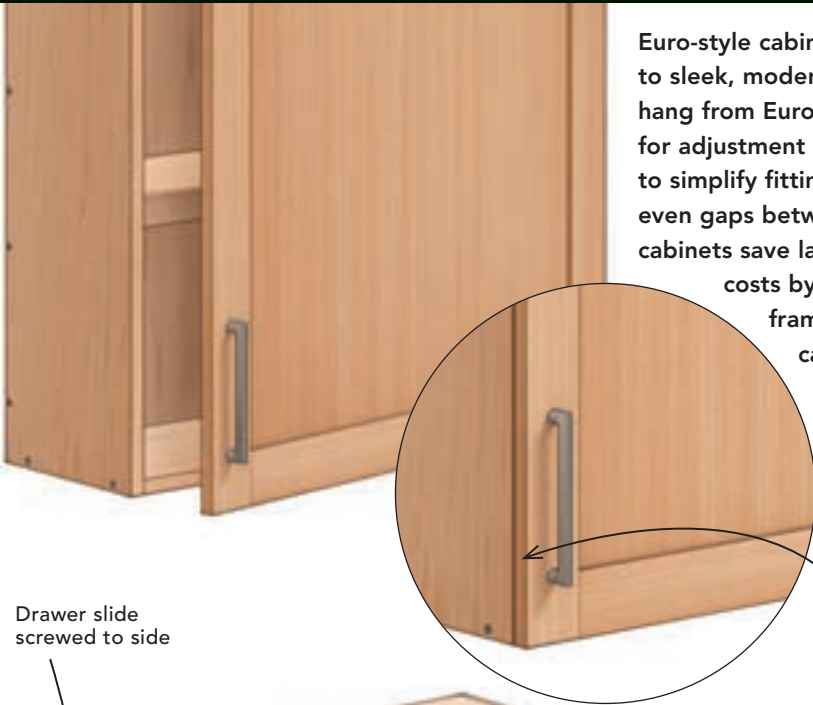
Shelf below drawer
for rigidity

1/2-in. prefinished maple
plywood drawer

Euro hinge

Rough base covered
with finish material

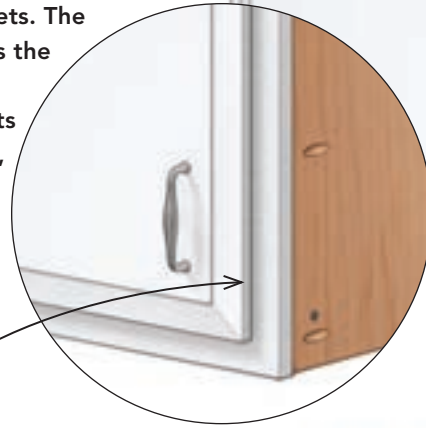
Plywood edges covered
with iron-on edgeband



OVERLAY CABINETS



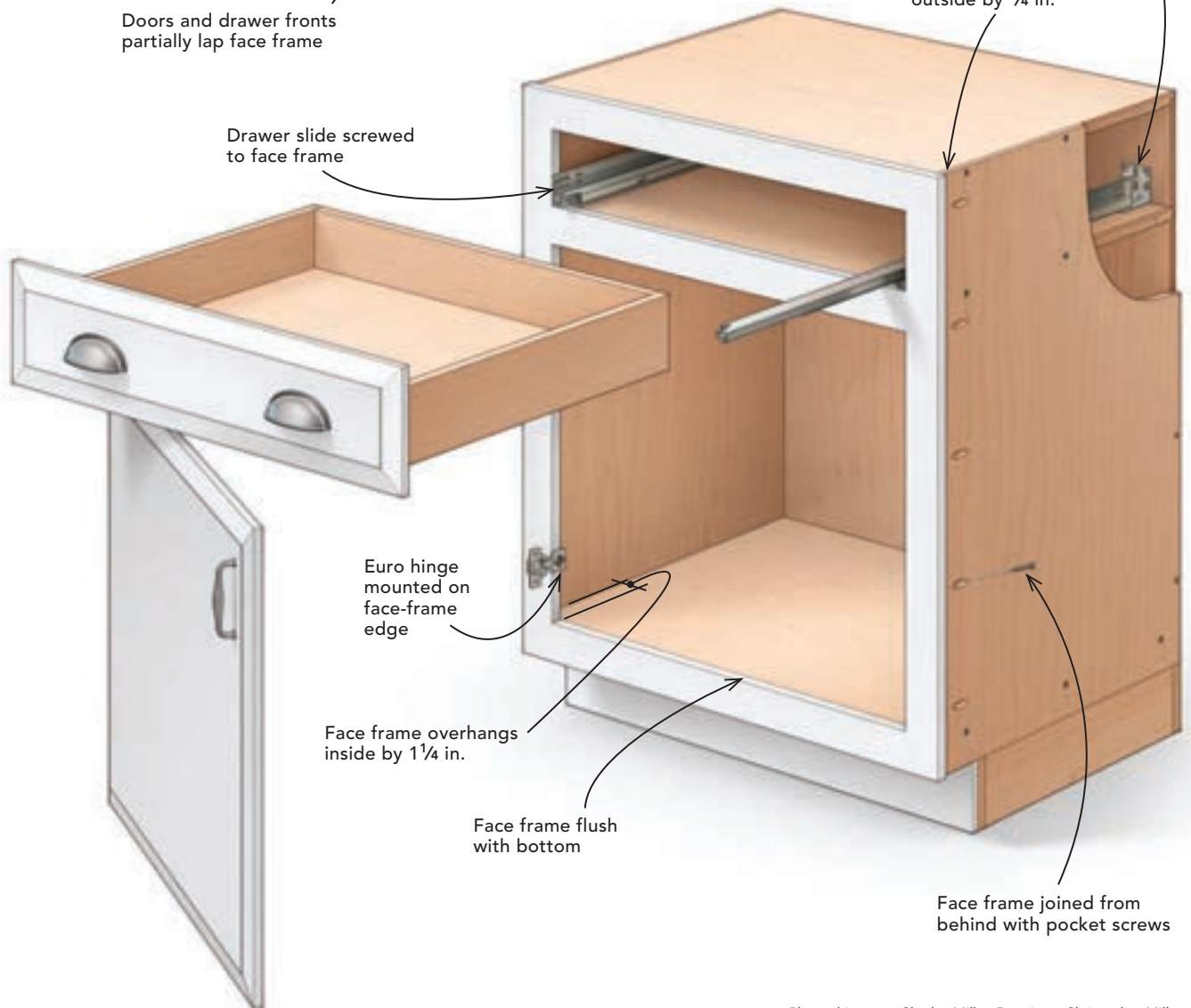
For a traditional look, overlay cabinets have a face frame made from $\frac{3}{4}$ -in. by $2\frac{1}{4}$ -in. hardwood, joined together and to the carcass with pocket screws. The larger space between doors and drawers makes adjusting them easier than with Euro cabinets. The face frame overhangs the outside and inside of the carcass. This limits access to the interior, and, compared to Euro cabinets, the drawers and interior space will be smaller.



Doors and drawer fronts partially lap face frame

Drawer slide screwed to face frame

Drawer-slide support screwed to back
Face frame overhangs outside by $\frac{1}{4}$ in.



INSET CABINETS

Inset doors and drawers offer a custom look, but it's time-consuming to create even gaps all around, and more expensive to build. To make it easier to mount the drawers and doors, I set the inside edge of the face frame flush with the inside of the carcass, letting it overhang 1½ in. to the outside of the case sides. Built this way, inset cabinets have the least amount of interior space.

