

White Oak Cabinets – Why the Hype?

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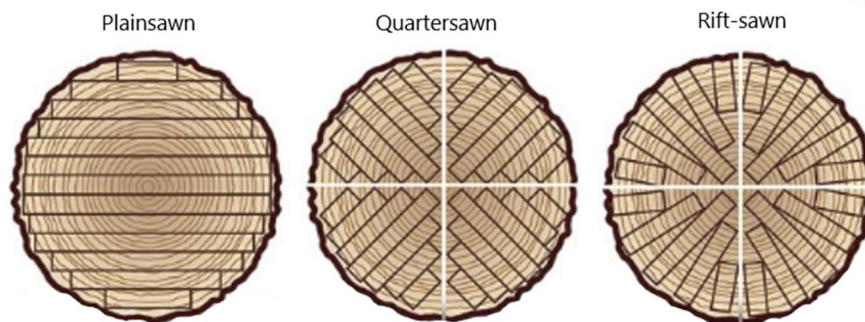
There is a lot of misinformation about White Oak on the web so let's take a minute to examine what it is, why it's trending for cabinetry and how it compares to other woods.

White oak is a distinct species of oak trees that is slightly harder than red oak, American cherry and American walnut, making it a wonderful option for flooring as well as cabinetry. It will withstand daily use well without dents or damage. Compared to red oak, the tones are lighter and tend more toward grey/white than the yellow/red tones that are seen with the traditional red oaks that were used predominantly throughout the 70's and 80's. Since it is native to colder climates, white oak growth rings are tighter than red oak which creates a denser wood. Also used to make boats and wine barrels, the tone and tight grain of white oak also makes it very appealing to designers and homeowners. It continues to be the most valuable of all oak species and, therefore, also makes it the most expensive oak.



Image source: Purewow.com

When oak (white or red) is cut from logs into lumber, there are a few different approaches and, depending on the cut, the look is very different.



- **Plainsawn** (also called flatsawn) cuts are made tangentially and create minimal waste; this results in the least expensive cut as it produces the most boards from a single tree. Plainsawn lumber is cut parallel to the growth rings and will show growth rings intercepting both the board face and edge, leaving irregular shapes visible in the grain. Cabinets made from plainsawn red oak will always be the most economical option amongst hardwoods. **Price: Lowest**
- **Quartersawn** cuts are made at a 90-degree angle, perpendicular to the growth rings, meaning that a log is cut into quarters and the first board is cut from the face and the second from the opposite face. The growth rings will run parallel to the board face and growth rings will be visible on the edge. Medullary rays are very visible and create what has been referred to as "tiger oak". Not every cut in this process will yield quartersawn boards, most will be rift-sawn (*see below*). Given the limited yield of quartersawn lumber per tree, the pricing of cabinets in quartersawn oak (regardless of white or red), will be much higher than the standard plainsawn. **Price: Higher**

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- **Rift-sawn** cuts are made neither parallel nor perpendicular to the growth rings but instead is cut in angles of thirty to sixty degrees, meaning that every board will have some quartersawn grain where the growth rings run parallel to the board face AND the growth rings run parallel to the edges as well. This creates a very consistent and tight grain. **Price: Highest**



White oak is a timeless option that creates beautiful cabinetry – and there is little chance of it being “off trend” any time soon. And while the white oak tree is not an endangered species, its limited availability makes it even more sought after and drives the price higher.