Spiral/Ribbon Finials

Utube Video: You can find these various videos by searching "Ribbon or Spiral Finials". Matt Harbor has a detailed description of the one he did for World Wide Woodturner.

Tools Needed: Your tools my vary from the ones I have listed.
Spinsle roughing gouge, skew, parting tool, pull saw, calipers, Jacobs chuck with a 1/2" drill bit, rotary tool (Dremel, Master Carver, Foredom) cutting bit and detail burrs, painters tape, exacto knife, Sanding paper 180 grit and down.

Wood Choices: Between 1 1/2" / 2" square spindle blank approximately 4" long. Spindle turning always has the grain running with the ways. If you are making a lid for your piece size the lid blank first and turn the remainder down to size your finial. Straight grain woods are best with tight grain. You will also need a 1/2" dowel rod approximately 5" long.

Process:

1). Mount your piece between centers and turn round. Make a tenon to fit your chuck. Mount your piece to the chuck.
2). Now measure out you spaces for the bottom and finial that will go on your piece. (Lid or just finial) cut off any extra on the finial end.
3). Drill a 1/2" hole the depth you desire and add 3/16" for dowel rod to seat into. Sand the inside of your dowel now as it is solid. Now you can use your calipers to measure down to 18mm diameter. (Use your parting tool to make a couple cuts) Now blend you depth cuts together for a uniform 18mm. This should leave around 3mm for your finial wall thickness.
4). Determine you spiral/ribbon design using your painters tape. Remember whatever is covered will be your finial so if there are certain grains you want to show be sure they are covered. Tape wight can be to your choosing. I use 5/16' most of the time.
5). Now that you have your piece designed it"s time to cut. Place you 1/2' dowel rod in the 1/2" finial hole. Secure with your tailstock. (Just snug it up)
6). **Cutting:** You have options. Rotary tools or pull saws or you have another option. Rotary tools us carbide cutters (Dremel #199 or #543) /These cutters do a good job, but do have some control issues if you are not a frequent user. (I started with the #199)
I now use a pull saw in combination with the rotary cutter. The pull saw leaves a cleaner cut and is easy to control.
7). After choosing your cutting method cut along the tape line on both sides starting from the top. For best results make three, or so, passes as this is no time to rush. Cut until you see the white of you dowel. Now you need to cut off the non taped spiral at the base.
8). Now that you have your finial lines cut moved to the base and locate the line you used for drilling. Remember we added 3/16" for the dowel so you may want to remeasure before cutting. Cut it proud as you can sand any extra away. Use a burr to

punch a hole through to determine exactly the bottom is. This step will save you cutting off below the end of the spiral.
9) Determine if you like the points on the top of the spiral and cut to your liking. Be sure to support the spiral when doing this step.
10). You are ready for the soft touch part. Sand the edges of your spiral being sure to support it at all times. Always start at the top and work down. You can use fine burrs, sanding disks, sanding drums, and finish up with hand sanding at a fine grit.
11). Once the above is completed address the base. If you end up with a drill this should be blended in or sanded to accommodate a stone or small bead.
12). Make any last decisions on your finial and part it off. If you made a lid with the finial already attached you are already sized. If your finial is going to be attached to a premade top you can cut the base down to match the size you want. (1/4", 5/16",3/8") It is helpful to use an open ended wrench to size this step.

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