

German Cuckoo Clocks Are Carved Masterpieces

The idea of the German cuckoo clock began in the famed [Black Forest](#) area of southwest Germany in the 18th century, started by a man named Franz Anton Ketterer. He created the first masterpiece entirely out of wood, including the intricate detailed plate and gear mechanisms that spun the clock to life.

In the beginning, Black Forest farmers would collaborate during the cold months to make these clocks out of environmental materials and sold during the Spring as art. With ongoing development came innovative methods of material design, with more complicated inner decorations and workings.

The German cuckoo clock began to appear “life-like,” with birds’ wings that moved and feathers that fluttered. In the 1730’s, cuckoo clocks were all handmade out of wood. After a few years, metal gears and plates became the norm.

The German cuckoo clock is special for its customized features. The finest woodwork contains hunting scenes, family scenarios, and military gatherings. Most notably, the German cuckoo clock would come equipped with a “cuckoo” call (sounded by bellows and whistles) that rang either every 30 minutes or every hour.

In addition, people began to focus on different aspects of clock making by learning how to carve, make cases, and paint. They recognized other ways to improve the German cuckoo clock craft, such as running weights under clocks instead of spring driven types. Many clock designers began to carve their own niches within the industries, adding moving parts as needed to address growing trends while trying to find the big idea in the process.

Today, the German cuckoo clock’s hallmark feature is a conventional design as well as traditional — many times in the shape of a small birdhouse.

US households hold them as a permanent fixture on walls in particular. Decorative elements today continue to be wild in nature with animals, hunting scenes, and more. In addition, other Black Forest scenes may be there like spinning mill wheels and dancing couples swaying to music. Some cuckoo clocks even have birds popping out through a small trap door whenever the clock strikes and disappears after the gong stops ringing.

Despite its traditional past consisting of intricately carved wood, the German cuckoo clock continues to grace homes today. They are in high demand and represent a rooted past, a guarded present, and a fantastic future.

It remains a hand carved masterpiece free from the clutches of being labeled a mass produced item and will continue to be cherished for generations to come. ;-)