

Stave Drum Styles

The first drum was something that made a sound when hit with something else. Drums, as we know them today, have existed from around 6000 B.C. Drums have been used by all major civilizations across the world, as sacred, symbolic or ceremonial objects. As you know, drums have been used to send messages over long distances. During medieval times, drums were used to send encoded messages to soldiers.

What is a stave drum? Think of wooden barrels like wine caskets. They're made of individual pieces of wood that are held together with tight-fitting metal hoops.

Before assembly, the edges of the staves are beveled precisely to form tight joints. After the hoops are put in place, the staves are curved by wetting and heating them over a fire. A winch is used to form the familiar "barrel" shape.



Figure 1. Wooden wine barrels, probably oak.

Traditional stave barrels intended to hold wine, water, or food don't use glue. Wet staves swell against the resisting metal hoops; this prevents leakage.

Most stave drums don't "bow" out like barrels do, and all will have some kind of animal-hide or plastic head rather than a wooden top. You'll also use glue to join the staves. Commercially-made stave drums, such as small snare drums, use metal bands to hold the staves together and to hold the heads on. I don't cover that method here, but you can get the parts from any of the drum-supply companies if you want to try it. Just do a search on the Web.

Drum names vary based on region of origin, there are four basic shapes:

Straight-stave Drum: Small- to medium-sized straight-stave drums are called "tom-toms" in the West, and "dununs" or "djununs" in Africa. Very large but short straight stave drums are called "thunder" or "ceremonial" drums. The top and bottom widths of the staves in a straight-stave drum are the same. This creates a drum



Figure 2. "Straight stave" drum.