

BY TOM & KAY BENHAM

# adapt a cabo

Jewelry makers can  
change a simple  
cabochon into a  
stunning custom stone

## A WEEK OF PURE MAGIC!

That's how we recall a very special workshop we attended a few summers ago at Wildacres Retreat, just off the picturesque Blue Ridge Parkway in North Carolina. It was an intensive learning experience in which we strove to acquire the basics of carving stone.

World-renowned gem carver Michael Dyber generously shared his knowledge with and guided 17 eager students who transformed inexpensive cabochons into what all deemed works of art upon returning home. Bear in mind that most of the students had no previous experience with cabochons other than setting them in metal. We were all neophytes when it came to the carving process and all were successful in our beginning efforts. The valuable knowledge we gained set us on a journey down an unexpected path, and we've continued to hone our carving skills ever since then, which eventually led to our own experiments of adding textures to cabochons.

Today, we often find ourselves contemplating how we might alter our cabochons – or some of them, because some cabochons just can't be improved upon. What you do, how simple or complex, depends on your own taste and style as well as the time and effort you're willing to invest in learning the necessary skills.

Just adding a few well placed lines can transform a cabochon from plain to attention-grabbing. Inlaying a faceted stone into the surface of a cabochon produces a definite spark of interest. Perhaps best of all, committing yourself to the challenge can also satisfy your creative drive.

Here are some of our simple ways to alter cabochons to increase interest and value.

Our adapted cab techniques include diamond drill and inlaid wire, diamond flame bur, diamond wheel bur, stone in stone and two flex shafts to make concentric circles.

