

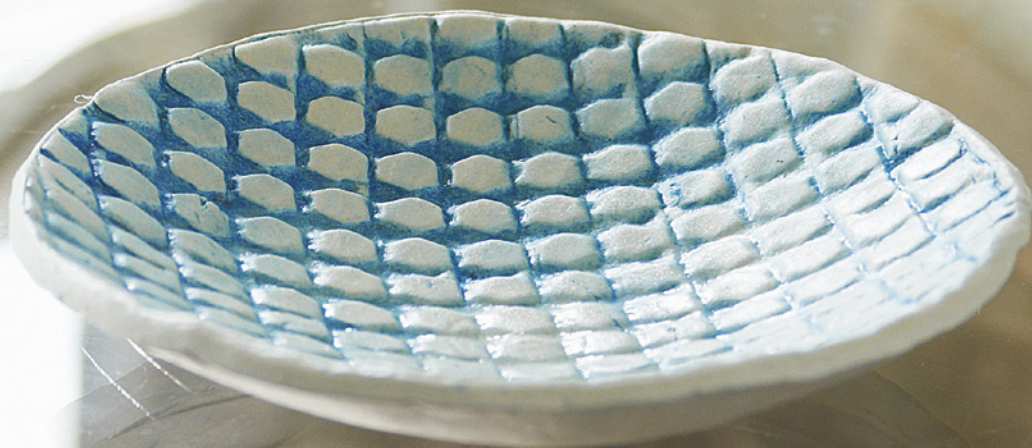


MAKE IT WITH **AIR-DRY CLAY**

20 FANTASTIC PROJECTS FOR MODELLING, SCULPTING AND CRAFTING



Fay De Winter



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AIR-DRY CLAY



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CONTENTS

Introduction	5	Coral Ring	56
CHAPTER 1: TOOLS, MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES	6	Coloured-clay Bead Necklace	60
Materials	7	Bird Brooch	64
Tools and Equipment	10	Shell Earrings	68
Pinching	12	Miniature Bird Sculpture	70
Coiling	14	Miniature House Sculpture	74
Creating Slabs	16	Marbled Bead Bracelet	78
Making and Pressing Sprigs	18	Flower Tealight Holder	82
Surface Decoration	20	Geometric Planter	86
Sealing	24	Lidded Coil Pot	92
CHAPTER 2: PROJECTS	26	Balloon Barnacles	98
Gift Box Decorations	28	Marbled Pinch Pots	102
Elegant Feather Tags	32	Pea Pod Bowl	106
Hanging Festive Decorations	36	Templates	110
Heart Wall Hanging	40	Index	111
Impressed Trinket Dishes	44	Credits	112
Miniature Mirror	48		
Miniature Button Pegs	52		

INTRODUCTION



I love to make and experiment with clay. My earliest memory is, at the age of four, making a house out of clay at school and being photographed for the local newspaper; little did I know that I would become a ceramicist later on in life.

There are so many qualities about air-dry clay that I enjoy and believe you will enjoy, too. To take a lump of clay and transform it into an object is magical and, with a knowledge of different forming and decorating techniques, you can practise and shape it into a never-ending range of pieces. Air-dry clay is an ideal material to use in any space without the added cost of firing a kiln.

I could not imagine my life without clay! Once you start making, I believe you will feel the same way, too.

Happy creating!

Fay De Winter



TOOLS, MATERIALS & TECHNIQUES

Materials

Clay is one of the most versatile materials you can use in art and design. The air-dry clay used in this book is non-toxic and also dries naturally in air, so there is no need for an expensive kiln.

What is air-dry clay?

If you would like to create something a bit different and unique, air-dry clay is a perfect material to use. The techniques can be as simple as making a pinch pot to making a coiled vessel and using layers to build up a 3-D piece. Once your projects are dry (usually within 24 hours), you can finish them off with your favourite art markers, paints or nail polish colours.

Clay really gives everybody a chance to express their own creativity; if you can imagine something, then you can create it in clay! For this book, DAS air-drying white clay has been used. A superb introductory clay, this air-hardening modelling clay has a smooth, even, easy texture that makes it perfect for home or studio projects for artists and crafters of all ages.

Details:

- Available in white or terracotta
- 1kg (2.2lb) packs
- Acid free
- Non-toxic

Working with air-dry clay

SURFACES

Clay can be modelled on any hard surface, such as a desk, using a wooden or plastic board to protect your worktop. Whatever surface you use, always clean it with water after use.

STORAGE

Keep clay in a sealed bag until you need it. Once the bag has been opened, reseal it as well as possible after every use, and keep it in a cool, dark place.

CONSISTENCY

Clay straight out of the sealed bag will be the correct consistency to begin modelling with. However, if the clay has been kept for some time or in the wrong conditions, then check the consistency before use.

To check if the clay is the correct consistency, break off a small section and pinch it. The material should be soft enough to do so, and if pieces are torn off then they should rejoin easily when pressed together.

WATER (SLIP)

Water can be very useful when modelling with clay for a number of reasons. If the clay is sticking to the surface on which it is being worked, then applying a little water to the surface or to your hands can help to reduce this.

Small amounts of water can also be used to smooth the clay surface with your finger, reducing cracks in the item being made.

Brushing water onto the clay surface can produce what is known as 'slip'. This can be used like glue, to join pieces of clay together, giving a strong connection and preventing additions from cracking apart.



DRYING

Once items have been modelled in air-dry clay, they take about 24 hours (for every 1 cm [$\frac{3}{8}$ in] of thickness) to dry naturally. Thicker and more solid items will take longer than this. When you are drying out pieces, dry them slowly and place a piece of plastic loosely over the top for the first 24 hours. Rotate works or place them on a dry sponge to encourage even drying and circulation of air to the piece. Only decorate pieces once they are completely dry.

Once the items have dried, they are still porous and able to absorb moisture; it is advisable to paint or seal them to give them extra strength (see pages 24–25).

CRACKING

If you find your pieces crack during drying, you can fill the cracks with coils of damp air-dry clay (see left), but you will need to keep the plastic cover on them to slow the drying-out period and to avoid further cracking.

CUTTING

When cutting off sections of clay from the original block, it is best to use a sharp knife. When cutting out items in rolled-out clay or modelled shapes, you can use craft or ordinary knives.

Making your own clay

Homemade clay recipes are perfect for modelling clay projects or other clay crafts. There are lots of different recipes you can try. Do you want something quick and easy? Or would you prefer to bake your finished model for a more permanent effect? Below are two recipes that have been selected to suit these different requirements.

MAKING CLAY WITH GLUE

This speedy recipe doesn't require much time at all, so it's great for when you just want to get going. Here's what you'll need:

- 2 cups cornflour
- 1 cup school-grade PVA glue
- Bowl

Add the two cups of cornflour to the bowl to begin with. This is a manageable amount to start off with.

Slowly begin adding in the glue Stir the mixture as you add in small amounts of glue. Continue adding glue until your mixture reaches a good consistency. The rough ratio you should work to is about two parts cornflour, one part glue.

- If it's too sticky, add more cornflour.
- If it's too crumbly, add more glue.

USING THE CLAY

Once you're satisfied with what you've made, set it in a cool, dry place to harden.

You should only make the amount of clay needed for your project, as the clay can dry out over time, even if it is stored in a sealed container or clingfilm.

COLD PORCELAIN CLAY

Cold porcelain clay is a great alternative to air-dry clay; it has a fine and delicate quality to it. You should note that it shrinks up slightly as it dries. Below is a list of items that you will need:

- 1 cup school-grade PVA glue
- 2 tablespoons white vinegar
- 2 tablespoons baby oil
- 1 cup cornflour
- Clingfilm
- Microwave-safe bowl
- Extra baby oil so the clay won't stick to your hands

Begin by placing the wet ingredients in the microwave-safe bowl This includes the glue, vinegar and baby oil. Next, stir in the cornflour until your mixture has a smooth consistency with no lumps. The texture will be gooey.

Microwave on high for 15 seconds Remove the bowl and stir the mixture, which will be hot and still gooey. Microwave on high for another 15 seconds. Remove the bowl and stir the mixture. The surface should have firmed up slightly.

Microwave on high for a third time for another 15 seconds, then remove the bowl and check the mixture. The clay should have pulled together to form a sticky, lumpy ball.

However, if the clay still appears gooey, microwave it for another 15 seconds. The end result should still be sticky and pliable; if it seems dry, you may have microwaved it for too long.

Knead the clay Allow the clay to cool for a few moments, oil your hands with baby oil and knead the clay for about three minutes, until the texture is smooth and stretchy. Roll it into a ball, then pull it apart to test it. The dough is ready when it stretches and forms a peak when you pull off a piece. If it breaks into bits, it's overcooked.

Wrap it in clingfilm for storage If you're not going to use your clay straight away, wrap the clay tightly in clingfilm to keep it workable.



Colouring clay

Most air-dry clay comes in plain white, but you can easily add colour at the raw stage rather than painting the dried clay. To colour it, mix small amounts of water-based paints, such as acrylic paint or poster paints, with the clay. Food-grade colourants such as cake colouring pastes or gels, but not liquids, can be used, too.

Always test a small piece of white clay first, to determine how the colour will work and to get the hue you're after.

Knead the colour through the clay Soften the clay first by working it in your hands, then put on plastic gloves to prevent your hands from being stained and add the colourant gradually while kneading. This will ensure that the colour is distributed evenly throughout the clay. By adding the colourant slowly, you can determine when you've added enough colour.

Work on a surface that can either be disposed of or washed easily, such as a layer of greaseproof paper over the counter top or a plastic cutting board or sheet.

If you want to make clay in several colours, separate the batch into two or more parts and colour each one separately. You can colour clay that you've made yourself in the same way.

