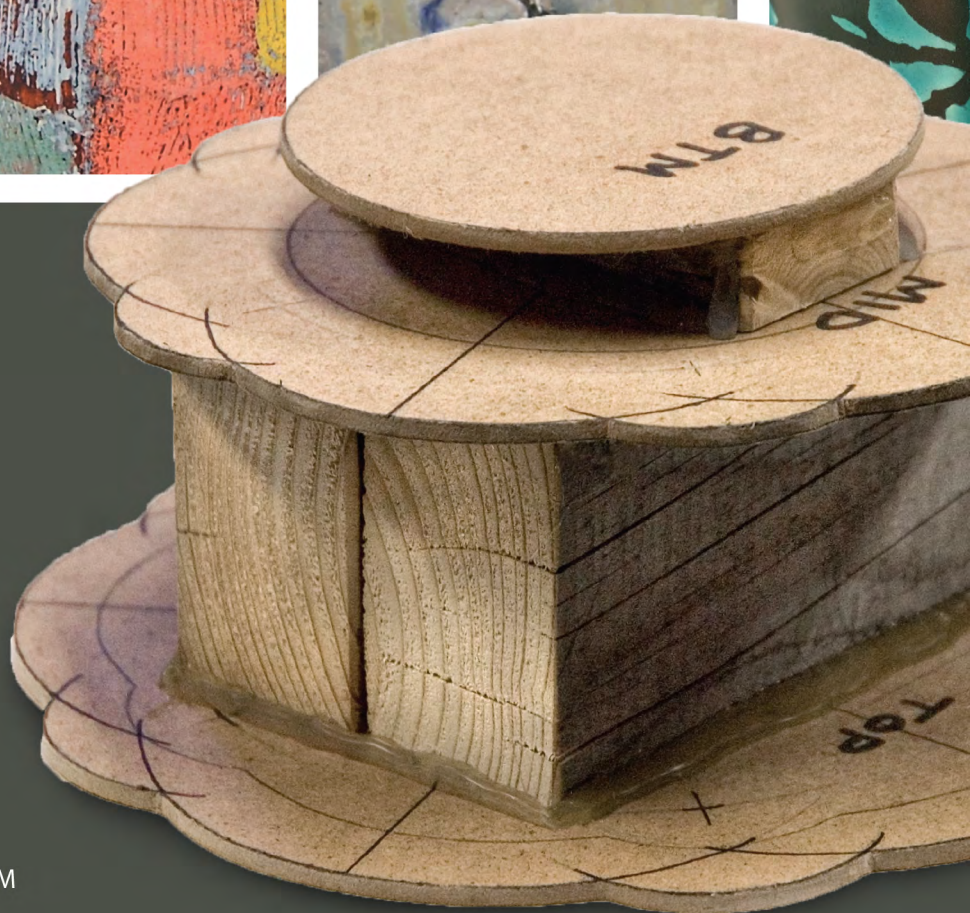


MAKING AND USING MOLDS & TEMPLATES



EDITED BY ASH NEUKAMM

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Bisque-Molded Foot-Ring Pukis

by Annie Chrietberg

Many of us have had this experience: You're at a show, selling your work, drinking out of one of your cups (because what else would you be drinking out of?), and a customer, not knowing that your cup was in use, picks it up, and dumps out your drink. Why? Because when people are looking at a pot, one of the first things they do is turn it over and check out the bottom. The bottom of the pot is important for more than strength and durability, it should also be well-finished and aesthetically pleasing.

As a handbuilder, I had been making pots with flat bottoms, and dressing them up with texture, glaze, and my carved signature, but was longing

for the lift and possibility for a curved floor that wheel throwers can get so easily with a trimmed foot ring. My meticulous nature wouldn't allow me to simply add a coil, so I returned to the wheel to make a more precise tool that would allow me to make and attach a very tidy foot ring to the bottom of a pot made with a textured slab. I call them foot-ring pukis after the curved bowl or gourd that Native Americans used to start building their curved-bottom coil pots.

THROWING A PUKI

Foot-ring pukis are very easy to make with the most basic of throwing skills. For a cup-sized



puki, center a two-pound ball of clay on a bat (1), shape it, and put the curve in it that you want for the floor of the pots you plan to make (2). Leave it attached to the bat and let it dry to a trimmable, leather-hard state (3). Then, create the valley in the puki that allows you to form the foot ring (4, 5). Cut the puki off the bat, let it dry, and bisque fire it. Now you have a tool that you can re-use over and over to put a tidy foot ring on the bottom of a handbuilt pot.

USING THE PUKI

Start by adding a coil of clay into the valley (6). Scrape the outside edges of the coil back to the edge of the puki, leaving a peak in the center, all the way around (7).

The peak will aid in the attachment of the coil to the base of the pot. Score and add slip to the coil, then position a round, cut slab (textured if you desire) onto the puki and press lightly to attach it to the coil (8), being careful not to eradicate the



1 Center a 2-pound ball of clay then create the basic shape of your foot-ring puki. **2** Refine the curve in the surface, which will correspond to the curve of the floor of your pots. **3** Trim away any excess clay from the base to remove weight, then refine the edges. **4** Compress the surface with a rib, then create a foot-ring valley with a trimming tool. **5** Smooth the edges of the foot-ring valley with your finger, then dry and bisque fire the puki. **6** Once your puki is bisque fired and ready to use, roll out a coil of clay thicker than the valley, so it overflows when you press it in.



7 Scrape back the coil to the edges of the valley, leaving a slightly raised center to the coil. **8** Score, add slip, then drop the base of the pot onto the puki, and press lightly to attach the foot ring. **9** Flip the puki mold over, tap the bottom of the pot out and onto your fingertips. **10** Place the base onto the bottom of your pot and blend in the seams between the foot ring and the bottom of the pot. **11** Replace the puki then flip the pot. Leave the pot in the puki while you blend in the coil on the interior and begin to shape the pot. **12** Before any drying occurs, remove the pot from the puki and refine the shape and finish the pot.

texture. This slab forms the floor of the pot. Now, turn the puki over and tap the floor until the foot releases onto your fingertips (9).

Place this base on the bottom of your pot, then blend the foot ring in to get a good attachment (10). Next, replace the puki upside down on the bottom of the pot, and flip the pot back over while it's on the puki. Leave the puki in place while you blend

in the interior coil and shape the pot without distorting the foot or the texture (11). Then, flip the pot back over, remove the puki, flip back to upright, and finish the pot (12).

Foot-ring pukis can be made in any size to fit large and small diameter pots and can be designed with the specific curve that you need for the bottoms of the pots you want to make.

Tar-Paper Patterns: Eight-Sided Casseroles

by Ann Ruel

As a pottery instructor, I'm constantly on the lookout for materials that can be turned into molds and templates for handbuilding projects in my classes. My students enjoy making pottery they can use in their kitchens or can give away as gifts. One project idea that combines both of these desires uses an eight-sided Dixie®-brand paper plate as a mold for a casserole dish.

CREATE A REUSABLE TEMPLATE

Start by cutting the rim off of an eight-sided Dixie® paper plate. Roll out a slab and place the plate in the center. Using a straight edge, draw perpendicular lines at each corner of the long sides, resulting in eight lines drawn out from the plate.

Next, measure 2 inches along all eight lines. Connect the lines to form a 2-inch border around the plate (1). Cut along the lines.

With the plate still in the center of the clay, flip the slab and plate over. The plate acts as slump mold and support for the clay. Pull the long edges straight up to form side walls. Once these are standing straight, repeat this on the four corners, but don't bend the edges over the long sides (2). Each corner edge still needs to be trimmed to fit. Where the edges of both sides of the corners meet the long sides, cut off the excess clay (3). Now all the sides should fit together.

Remove the plate, lay the slab flat onto tar-paper, and trace around it (4). Cut out the shape and you have a casserole template. The tar-paper will last longer than the cardboard plate.

CUT, FOLD, REPEAT

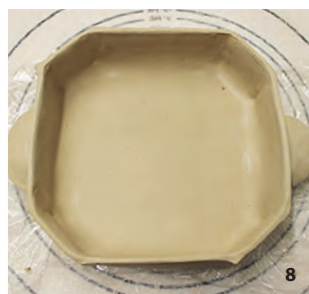
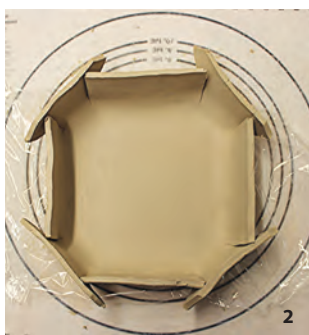
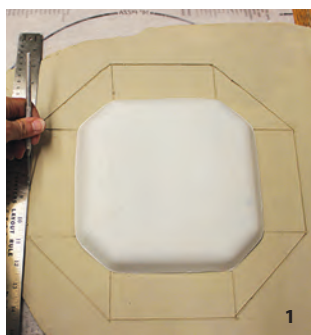
To make the casserole, snip the corners of the rim on a second eight-sided plate so that the edges of the rim fold down, but don't cut the rim completely off. This eliminates the temptation to stretch the clay over the rim of

the plate. Take one more paper plate and cut the rim completely off. This second plate will be used to push down on the clay once it's resting on the inside of the first plate.

Roll out a slab of clay big enough for your template to fit on. Make sure the clay is dry enough that when the sides are bent, the clay stays straight, but not so dry that the sides crack when being manipulated. Place the template that you made on top of the clay (5). Cut the excess clay away. Place a piece of plastic wrap on the center of the slab. Then place the paper plate with the bent edges onto the plastic. This plate should be placed face down so that when the slab is flipped, it then acts as a slump mold (see 7). Flip the slab, the plastic, and the plate over. Make sure the plate is in the very center. Once this is exact, use the paper plate with no rim to push the clay gently into the slump mold (6).

Gently pull the long sides up first and stand into position. Next, pull up the corner sides. Score and slip all the sides together. I prefer to work this step





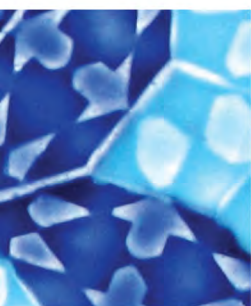
1 Draw a border around the plate. Use a straight edge and an X-Acto to cut it out. **2** Flip the slab over the top of the plate, pull up the side walls, then pull up the corners. **3** Trim the excess clay off the corners to the same height as the side walls. **4** Lay the cut slab on tar-paper, then trace around it to make a template. **5** Place the template on top of a slab and cut away the excess clay. **6** Use the rimless paper plate to push the clay gently into the slump mold. **7** Fit another paper plate over the top to make sure the form is straight. **8** Make handles for the sides of the casserole dish.

from the outside of the form in, compressing the sides together. I find that working from the inside tends to push the clay seams apart. I also make sure that I work the very top of each side together to make a good seal.

Take a look at the sides and make sure they're even and straight. Put the casserole on a banding wheel and make sure the rim is even. Finish the rim using whatever technique you prefer. I like to use a coil around the top. When you're finished with the rim, to check how straight your form is, take another

paper plate and fit it down over the rim (7). It should fit snugly into the opening. When stiff enough to hold its shape, lift the casserole from the plate and compress the bottom curve. This helps prevent the clay from cracking in transition areas between the floor and the walls. Place the casserole back down onto the plastic-lined plate. Make handles for the sides if you wish and dry slowly (8).

You can also make a lid for these casseroles using the same eight-sided plate, adding an interior flange that fits inside of the casserole's rim.



In *Making and Using Molds & Templates*, you'll find 23 step-by-step projects that demonstrate a variety of traditional and non-traditional techniques for building and using molds and templates in the ceramics studio. You'll learn how to cast traditional plaster molds, build custom wood and foam molds, learn how to design craft foam and tar-paper templates, and much more! Each project offers inspiration and invaluable tips from clay artists who've employed the use of molds and templates in their own studios for years. With these tips and techniques as a starting point, the sky's the limit on what you can create with molds and templates!



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