



THROWING TECHNIQUES

Edited by Bill Jones

Ceramic
Arts
Handbook
Series



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The American Ceramic Society
600 N. Cleveland Ave., Suite 210
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Cover Image: Butter dish by Martha Grover, 8 inches (20 cm) in length, thrown and altered porcelain.

Frontispiece: Whiskey bottle by Matt Schiemann, 12 inches (30 cm) in height, custom stoneware, wood fired to cone 13, natural ash glaze.



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Preface

When it comes to ceramic techniques, throwing on the potters' wheel tops my list. I've always enjoyed every aspect of this challenging tool and constantly look for ways to mix and match techniques. And, although I learned many techniques in my throwing classes and workshops, I'm always surprised to see how many more there are still to be discovered.

As the editor of *Pottery Making Illustrated* for more than 17 years, we were always on the lookout for creative and innovative techniques we could publish. Artists would submit ideas and we would also seek out potters who used techniques we knew our readers would enjoy. Over the years we published scores of articles on throwing and, just when I thought we had covered pretty much everything, more creative ideas would come in.

One of the biggest changes in throwing that's occurred over the last 40 years is that many artists now use the wheel as a starting point for what they want to create. Some throw parts to be assembled into totally new forms, some focus on handbuilding using thrown parts with slabs and coils, and some throw forms only to remove darts to alter the natural roundness of the thrown form. For many of these artists, throwing is the fastest way to get their ideas into a tangible form.

In addition to altering and handbuilding thrown pieces, this handbook also covers techniques for creating large pieces using coils or building them in sections; ways to make covered jars with oval, square and round lids; unique items for the kitchen and much more. Every project contains a technique you can use on that piece or incorporate some aspect of it into what you're already making. It's exactly that spark of creativity that makes pottery so exciting and keeps us coming back for more!

In *Throwing Techniques*, we assume you already know how to throw and that you have mastered several, if not many, techniques. Our goal here is to expand your skills and your options by showing you a wide variety of techniques from dozens of talented potters. You can follow the directions step-by-step or just pick and choose from several methods to enhance your own skill set.

Whether you're a full-time professional or someone who just uses clay to relax, you'll find every project in this book contains something for you. From a basic teapot to a challenging dessert dish, each step-by-step project is guaranteed to inspire you for years to come.

Bill Jones

Lidded Forms

PRECISION LIDDED JARS

by Billy Lloyd



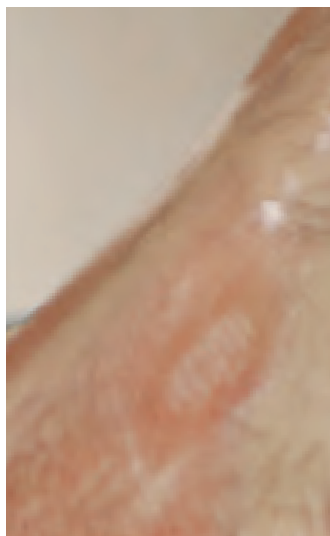
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I make thrown porcelain tableware intended for use. My aim is to combine a clarity of design with the nuances of making by hand. I use porcelain because of its density and strength when fired, the purity of its color and ability to enhance form. To ensure that my tableware is robust enough to endure the demands of consistent use, walls are thick and handles are comfortable to hold with

confidence. It is of equal importance, however, that the process used to produce the work is conspicuous in the finished form. The thrown nature of my pots means that one piece will always be slightly different from the next and I have learned to work with that rather than against it.

The glazed porcelain lidded jars illustrated here embody reoccurring themes within my

Throwing Techniques



1. Throw the jar to the appropriate height (usually achieved in 3 pulls).



2. Throw the gallery by pressing a steel rib into the inside of the wall.



3. Measure the width of the jar's gallery with calipers.



4. Throw the lid's flange by pressing a wooden rib into the outer edge.



5. Match the width of the flange to the jar's gallery.



6. Remove excess clay from the lid and refine the lid's flange.

tableware—a concern for scale, proportion, and repetition. If you can design and make an object that has as much impact on a small scale as it does upon enlargement you will have achieved a refined object of elegant proportions. I often create and display small groups of pots (jugs, bowls, or lidded jars for example) ascending in scale as a

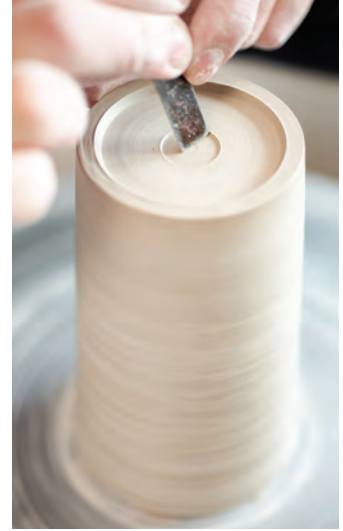
means of demonstrating this. This arrangement also refers, not entirely but in part, to a modular format I have adopted with some of my pieces—mugs stack on top of each other and bowls nest inside one another. In doing so, the pieces echo the collective use of a singular form and the repetitive nature of batch production.



7. Trim the wall of the leather-hard jar using a ribbon trimming tool.



8. Refine and straighten the exterior wall using a straight steel rib.



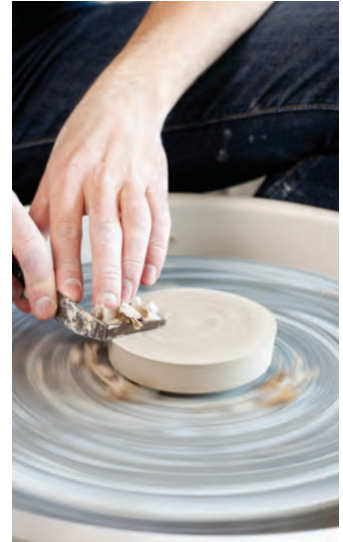
9. Trim a foot ring into the base. Add a trimmed circle for a stamp.



10. Trim an angle into the rim and refine the gallery with a rib.



11. Place the lid onto the jar and assess the fit of the rim and flange.



12. Trim excess clay from the lid with a steel turning/trimming tool.

Throwing

Center a ball of porcelain for the jar. When throwing the jar, an appropriate height is usually achieved in three pulls (figure 1). Throw the gallery by pressing down on half of the rim with a straight-sided steel kidney rib (figure 2). This should be done at a relatively slower pace com-

pared to the throwing of the vessel. Measure the width of the jar's gallery with calipers (figure 3) and save the measurement for use when throwing the lid.

Throw the lid as a low, thick cylinder. Use the caliper measurement as a guide for the diameter of the flange that sits down inside the pot. With



13. Using a flared chuck, trim the lid flange and refine the interior.



14. Align the lid and jar and trim the walls using a steel kidney.



15. Add a stamp to the bottom, supported by a large dowel.

a wooden rib, press down on the outer half of the thick rim, defining the flange (figure 4). Ensure the width of the flange is the same width as the jar's gallery, checking with the calipers again (figure 5). Remove excess clay from the sides of the lid, using the outside diameter of the jar's rim as a guide. The closer the lid is to being finished at this stage, the less trimming there is to do later on. Refine the lid's flange with a steel kidney (figure 6).

Trimming

After the jar has dried to a leather-hard state, place it upside-down on a centered chuck that fits the interior diameter. Trim the exterior wall of the jar with a ribbon turning tool to remove excess clay (figure 7). Refine and straighten the exterior wall of the jar with a straight-sided steel rib (figure 8). Trim a foot-ring into the base (figure 9), then trim a central location for your stamp using a narrow steel kidney. Flip the jar over and trim an angle into the rim of the jar and refine the gallery (figure 10). Place the lid onto

the jar and assess the fit (figure 11). Next trim the top of the lid with a steel turning tool (figure 12). Place the lid upside down on a chuck (this one is a flared out cylinder that supports and stabilizes the lid securely) and trim the flange and refine the interior (figure 13). I am looking for a relatively tight fit, however, some tolerance is necessary to avoid a fusion of the two components during the glaze firing.

Align the lid and jar, this time placing the jar upside down onto the lid, supported by the chuck. Trim the exterior walls using a steel rib (figure 14). It is important that the exterior profile, spanning the jar and the lid, is continuous. The last step for me is stamping my B (a metal letterpress) onto the central location (figure 15). Use a flat-ended rolling pin to brace the interior of the base to ensure the clay does not crack when pressing down into it with the stamp. Place the lid onto the jar, and clean up the exterior surface with a wet sponge. The lidded jar is now complete and ready to dry slowly over the course of a week.

Spouted Forms

LOOSE-LEAF TEAPOT

by Clay Cunningham



Over the last year, I've spent a great deal of time at The Tea Smith in Omaha, Nebraska. It's here where I read or sketch, occasionally write, and enjoy endless varieties of loose-leaf teas from around the world. Loose-leaf, or whole-leaf teas, keep intact all of the essential oils that make teas flavorful and aromatic. They offer a much richer experience of tea than tea bags, which are often made of tea dust or fannings, age quickly, and lose much of the original zest that makes for a great cup of tea. While enjoying my tea, I began to ponder the problems inherent in creating a

teapot meant for serving loose-leaf teas. Usually when making a teapot, I simply cut a large hole where the spout will be added.

This is all well and good if a tea bag is used to corral the tea, but with loose-leaf, all of the leaves would either collect in the spout, cutting off flow, or would wiggle their way through and end up in my tea cup. I spoke with the shop owner, Tim Smith, about the subtleties and nuances of a great teapot and we decided that I should make some loose-leaf versions that include an infuser to be used in the shop.

Throwing the Body

One of my most deeply held tenets in the studio is to begin with the end in mind. In keeping with that mantra, I chose earthenware as my clay body for creating these teapots. Its high-iron content helps a pre-warmed teapot hold its heat much longer than a stoneware or porcelain teapot.

Begin by using a three-pound ball of clay and throw a cylinder. Lift and refine the wall to an ideal thickness of $\frac{1}{4}$ inch and leave extra thickness at the top $\frac{1}{2}$ inch to create the gallery for the infuser. Before creating the gallery, belly out the teapot by pressing outward from inside the pot while supporting the wall with the opposite hand on the outside. When doing this, it's important not to apply pressure to the lip of the teapot as that will make the opening too wide.

To create the gallery, place your hands just below the lip, about $\frac{1}{2}$ inch from the top, as if you were going to pull the clay taller. Instead of lifting the wall, use your fingers as supports for the clay as you press your left thumb straight down the middle of the lip, separating it into lower and higher halves (figure 1). Immediately take a measurement of the gallery opening with calipers (figure 2).

Throwing the Infuser

The two biggest concerns when making the infuser are that it fits snugly in the teapot's gallery, and that the gallery on the infuser is deep enough to accommodate a well-fitting and secure lid.

To create the infuser, open and shape a one-pound ball of clay into a cup shape. Leave a little extra clay at the top to create both the lip that will sit in the teapot's gallery, and a gallery built into the infuser for the lid to sit on, getting the sizing right for this part of the infuser takes some careful measuring and a little finesse. Create the gallery (figure 3) and take caliper measurements of the outside top edge where it will fit into the teapot and where the lid will sit in the infuser (figure 4).

You can adjust the height of your infuser depending on the type of tea you are using. Most teas only need to steep for 2–5 minutes. Certain teas, such as



1. Throw a round, belly-shaped pot with a gallery in the lip for the infuser.



2. Compress, refine, and smooth the shape, and measure the gallery for the infuser.



3. Throw a cup for the infuser, leaving extra clay at the rim to make a gallery for the lid.



4. Measure the infuser's gallery where the lid will sit.



5. Throw a very shallow bowl to be the lid, and measure it to fit the infuser.



6. Throw a hollow, bottomless cone shape for the spout, then curve it with a pencil.

oolong and puerh, will progress in flavor as the tea is steeped, some up to twenty minutes, offering a different experience each time the teapot is poured. Therefore, the teapots I make for oolong and puerh teas have taller infusers, ensuring steeping all the way until the last cup.

Lid

Throw the lid as you would a small shallow bowl. The diameter of the lid should be the same size as the gallery on the infuser (figure 5). Use a $\frac{3}{4}$ -pound ball of clay, making the lid as wide as the gallery on the infuser and only about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch tall. Keeping the curve shallow helps the lid to have just the right arch so as to visually continue the curve in the form of the pot.

Spout

Create the spout with a $\frac{3}{4}$ -pound ball of clay opened into a bottomless cone shape, with the wide point at the bottom and the slender end at the top. Shaping both hands into the 'pinching' position, collar the clay to resemble an upside-down funnel. A long, flamboyant spout is great for a purely decorative teapot, but a frequently used pot is better with a quiet, understated spout. Additionally, a larger spout means more weight. Since teapots have many added parts, and are picked up and poured often, a lighter weight is better.

Let the spout dry for a few minutes; just enough for the glistening surface to dull. To create an organic curve, slide a pencil into the spout while cupping the outside and carefully coax a slight curve (figure 6). The trick to achieving a curve is to create multiple small bends in many places as you pull the pencil out, rather than one big bend in one place. Let the spout dry until slightly firm to the touch.

Bringing It All Together

After all the pieces are leather hard, it's time to trim the bottom of the teapot, the infuser, and the spout to give them all a graceful curve. Refine the surfaces with a rubber rib to create a smooth surface (figures 7).



7. Trim the bottom of the teapot body, and compress and smooth the surface with a rib.



8. Trim the infuser and the lid and check them for a good fit, then add a handle.



9. Use a needle tool to create holes in the infuser, and smooth the clay with a chamois.

Because the lid is inset, it needs a handle. I create a leaf-shaped handle that pairs well with my decoration. Set the handle aside until it slightly stiffens and then score, add slip, and attach the handle onto the lid (figure 8).

To create the holes in the infuser so the water can circulate through the tea leaves, use a needle tool or a small drill bit to pierce the wall and the bottom. Use a chamois to smooth up any rough edges around the holes (figure 9).

Use an X-Acto knife to cut the spout at an angle, taking off a majority of the upper half. I prefer to cut with the blade perpendicular to the clay, slicing around the wall, instead of cutting straight through. This ensures that the spout holds its shape and doesn't collapse. Hold the freshly cut spout up to the teapot body and position it so that

the bottom of the spout is high enough on the pot so that when entirely filled, the tea won't spill out of the spout while at rest (figure 10). Trace around the spout with your knife so you know where to connect the spout to the teapot. Before adding the spout, be sure to cut an opening for the tea to exit the pot.

Because the tea leaves will be contained in the infuser, the opening can be of any shape or size. Attach the spout by scoring the joining surfaces and coat both sides with a hearty amount of slip (figure 11). Smooth the seam using a chamois.

Get a Handle

There are endless ways to make handles. I prefer to pull mine from a 2-pound ball of well-wedged clay. Begin by forming the ball of clay into a cone



10. Cut off the spout, and lightly pinch the edges to soften the transition to the pot. Before attaching, check the fit and trim as needed.



11. Trace around the spout with a knife then cut out a hole, score and slip the spout and body, then attach and smooth the joint.



12. Pull a handle to about 12 inches long, leaving a little extra clay at the ends. Drape it over a cardboard tube until it can hold its shape.

shape using the heel of your hands. Using a bucket of water over an area you do not mind getting messy, such as a sink, wet both your hand and the clay and get ready to pull. With your hand held in an okay sign around the cone, lightly pull down on the clay, coaxing it slowly into a long thin strap, leaving a little extra clay at the top and bottom of the strap to provide a little extra surface area when attaching the handle to the teapot. Drape the strap handle over a cylindrical form until it can hold its shape (figure 12). Note: Be sure the handle is tall enough to fit the placement and removal of the infuser (figure 13). Attach the handle then let the entire piece dry slowly.

Glazing

Glaze the interior by keeping your thumb over the spout, swirling the glaze around the inside, and then releasing the glaze out of the spout. Dip the lid as well, then clean off the bottom edge where it will touch the kiln shelf. Leave the entire infuser unglazed to ensure proper flow of the water through the tea leaves when in use.



13. Measure the handle for a proper fit—it must be tall enough for the infuser to be removed and inserted. Score, slip, and attach.

Bottomless Throwing

SARAH JAEGER'S HANDLED BAKERS

by Emily Donahoe



Patience and a few subtle techniques make this beautiful baking dish by Sarah Jaeger an attainable form for ceramic artists who work in all varieties of clay. Jaeger uses Grolleg porcelain, which she describes as “an unforgiving clay body.” To compensate, all parts for the dish are wheel thrown, then assembled. Throwing each piece means that the clay is compressed equally and less prone to cracking.

Pieces and Parts

Jaeger first forms two lumps of clay, both between 1¾ and 4 pounds (depending on the size of the finished baker). She centers one on a bat and opens it all the way through, so there’s no bottom.

After pulling the walls up with her fingers, leaving a slight flare at the bottom to help with assembly, she goes back in with a rib to even and compress the clay. Bracing the outside wall with her left hand, she uses a rib to flare the clay out half way down at a 45° angle (figure 1). The angle is not so steep that you couldn’t fill the dish to the brim; but also creates a lovely frame-like rim for the food in case you don’t.

Jaeger then smooths the rim with a piece of plastic and mops up the extra water and clay from the center with a sponge. Using a decorating disk centered onto the wheel head and a chopstick (figure 2), she very gently divides the dish



1. Throw a wide, bottomless cylinder, then flare the top half out at a 45° angle.



2. Place a dividing web in the center of the open form, and make marks dividing the baking dish into quarters.



3. Press along the bottom of the corners so the square form becomes more rectangular, then flute the rim.



4. Throw a flat disc to a diameter that's at least as wide as your bottomless cylinder, and a thickness of $\frac{3}{8}$ inch.



5. Cut the disc from the bat, then throw the slab at an angle on a canvas to stretch it into an oval.



6. Throw a short, flared bottomless cylinder then cut it in half to create the handles for the baking dish.

ALL IMAGES BY TONY FERRELL



7. Place the baker body onto the stretched thrown slab, trace around the form and cut the bottom slab to fit.



8. Flip the piece over onto foam, score the base and the edge of the slab bottom, then add slip and attach.

into quarters to guide the shaping of the piece. She releases the walls from the bat using a flexible metal rib to undercut the outside edge. She generously waters the bat outside and inside to ease the release of the walls from the bat, which she does by scooting a wire under the form and turning the wheel.

Jaeger shapes the piece, by gently pushing on the bottoms of the walls so that the square piece starts to look more rectangular. She then uses both hands to make the corner definition, fluting the corners to create an undulating rim (figure 3). Now, the walls are beginning to suggest the finished product. Jaeger allows the walls to dry until they are a soft leather hard.

Using the second large mound of clay that's the same weight as the one used for the walls, Jaeger then throws the bottom for the dish on the wheel.

She prefers to use too much clay rather than end up short. She throws a flat disc about $\frac{3}{8}$ inch thick (figure 4). Again, after using her fingers, Jaeger goes back in with a hard rubber rib to compress and even out the clay and remove any throwing lines. After carefully cutting it off the bat, Jaeger places the slab on a dry, canvas-topped table and dries her hands before the next step.

Jaeger stretches the wheel-thrown clay slab by throwing it down on the table at an angle (figure 5) until it begins to take on a shape closer to the body of the baker, but is slightly larger in diameter. She keeps the slab the same thickness as the walls of the pot to help with maintaining an even thermal expansion. If the bottom slab is too thin, it is likely to crack if the dish is used in the oven. Jaeger wraps the bottom completely in plastic so that it dries evenly and similar to the body.



9. Compress and bevel the attachment using a pony roller. A banding wheel makes this step easier.



10. When the piece is leather hard, flip it over and gently roll the bottom edge to refine the bevel.

Lastly, Jaeger throws curved handles for the dish, which, at first, aren't really handles at all. She begins in the same way she did the walls, just making them thinner and shorter. Again she pulls the edges up with her fingers and then goes back to compress and even them out using a rib. Using a pin tool on the exterior and a finger on the interior, she cuts completely around the bottom, and then cuts the circle in half to make the two sides (figure 6). These too are dried to soft leather hard.

Putting It All Together

When all the pieces reach soft leather-hard, Jaeger places the bottom slab on a masonite bat. She runs over the clay with a slightly damp sponge followed by a hard rubber rib on both sides. This removes any canvas marks and also improves the workabil-

ity of the clay. Jaeger sets the body form on top of the thrown slab and manipulates its shape so that it's symmetrical. She flutes the edges a little more. Using a banding wheel, she trims the slab to fit the body (figure 7) and removes the excess clay.

After marking the base and the walls so she can match them up again later, Jaeger flips the walls over onto a bat using a thin piece of foam so as to not mar the rim (figure 8). She scores the base of the body and the outer edge of the slab where the two parts will be joined, then uses a thick slurry to join them. The slight flare at the bottom of the wall helps it to better attach to the bottom. Jaeger presses the joint down gently. Then while reinforcing the piece from the inside, she smooths the joint with a sponge as it rotates on the banding wheel. Again using foam and a bat, she inverts the piece so that she can work on the bottom joint.



11. Accentuate the foot by drawing a line just above the bevel with a wooden knife.



12. Hold the handle slabs up to the baker to gauge the size you need.



13. Stack then cut the handles to size, bevel and score the ends, and attach to the baker.



14. Reinforce the attachment and compress the seam using a pony roller.

First, Jaeger runs a pony roller along the edges, evenly applying pressure to completely secure the joint. After cleaning the excess slurry with a sponge, she goes back with the same tool and creates a slight bevel (figure 9) around the bottom edge. Finally, she uses her fingers and a sponge to smooth and seal the edges together. Turning the piece right-side up, Jaeger tips the entire thing on its edge, rocking it back and forth to nudge the bevel a little further (figure 10). Jaeger wants the final piece to have a lifted, elevated feel instead of, as she says, “sinking into the table.”

Jaeger adds a final detail by using the tip of a wooden trimming tool to incise a line around the bottom of the foot, to add interest (figure 11)—depending on the glaze she uses, the line may or may not ultimately be visible.

Jaeger then adds the handles. First, she works them with a sponge to make them malleable. Holding the ends, she slaps each handle down on the canvas, pulling it into more of an arc shape. This technique also increases its flexibility. Jaeger then fits the handles to the baking dish (figure 12) and trims them to size, cutting each at a slight angle so they will connect better to the wall of the dish (figure 13). She scores the dish and joins the handles, scoring and slipping them if she needs to. Using her fingers and the side of her hand, she secures the handles and then goes back in with the roller to secure and smooth the joint edge. Next, Jaeger uses the pony roller to coax the top edges of the handles outward so they become more of an extension of the wall, and to enhance the rectangular shape of the dish (figure 14).

Throwing Large

BIG PLATTERS THE EASY WAY

by Yoko Sekino-Bové



Throwing large pieces (generally more than 10 pounds, or 4 kg) is an exciting challenge for any potter; however, many people of smaller stature hesitate to muscle out big pieces. It feels like an emotional, as well as a physical, challenge. I felt the same way until learning how to produce large serving platters in an effective way at a tableware studio where I worked as an apprentice. Following their instructions, and some techniques from my own experience, I found that throwing large flatware, such as plates, platters, and shallow bowls, demands less physical strength and promises a higher success rate compared to making tall shapes because you don't have to lift a high wall of clay on the wheel.

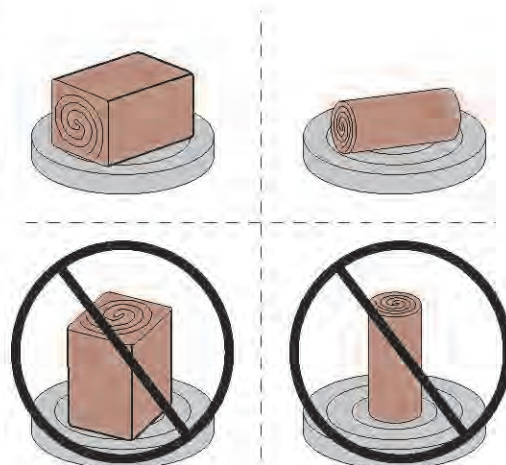
TOOLS

- 2 large smooth bats
- A smooth shower curtain cut to the shape and size of your bat
- Sponge
- Ribs
- 2–3-inch-thick stiff foam
- Wooden paddle (optional)

4 Tips to Success

To reduce the physical work and hassle, there are four things you can do when getting ready to throw a large platter.

1. Make sure that the clay you're using is soft. You don't need the clay to be firmer like you would for throwing a tall form, and it's less of a burden on your wrists while expanding the clay if it's soft. When using a fresh bag of commercially-prepared clay that's too big to wedge, slam the bag on the floor a dozen times from different angles to condition the clay.
2. When you place the clay on the wheel, lay it on its side in relation to the spiral created from wedging (figure 1). You will want to make the clay into more of a circular mound, but the illustration shows the orientation of the spiral.
3. The larger the plate, the greater the chance of an S-crack appearing. Allow freshly wedged clay to rest for at least a few weeks before using it to create big platters.
4. Check the inside diameter of your kiln. You can throw a plate or platter up to the exact size of the kiln and, as it dries, it shrinks enough to fit.



1. Place the clay on the wheel so that the spiral pattern from wedging or pugging the clay is not facing up.

Throwing Process

To make the wide platter shown here, I used 25 pounds of clay and a 24-inch-diameter bat. Place the bat on the wheel head then wet the surface. Place a circle cut out from a shower curtain on top of the wheel head. Make sure the curtain fits tightly and there are no trapped air bubbles (figure 2). The shower curtain layer removes the need for using a wire tool to separate the platter from the bat, allowing the clay to release more easily when it's flipped over and ready to trim.

Place the clay on the bat and start beating it down to a mound shape while slowly turning the wheel. Use dry hands (figure 3) or a wooden paddle (figure 4) and apply even pressure.

Flatten the mound to create a cake shape about 3 inches high. If you want to have a high rim for a bowl shape, keep the mound about 4–5 inches high. The diameter of the cake shape will be the size of the foot ring of the piece (figure 5).

Using a wet sponge and wet hands, open the form. Leave about 1 inch of clay between your fingers and the bat. Once the center hole is cre-

ated, pull out toward you while also pressing down lightly with both hands to create a flat bottom (figure 6). While you expand and compress the bottom, move your hands from the center to the rim, then from the rim to the center several times. This throwing back motion can redistribute the clay and make it even (figure 7). It takes several passes to fully open up the form. Finally, use a rib to smooth and compress the flat surface.

Once the bottom is open and compressed, start forming the wall. Pull up, compress the top, then move your fingers back down the vertical wall, compressing and essentially “pulling down” to keep it even. Keep the wall straight (figure 8). Leave enough clay on the rim, which will support the structure by tension.

Using a very wet sponge, slowly open the rim (figure 9). When you flare the wall out, start from the rim and move your hands down the wall toward the center to keep the desired angle and prevent collapsing. When deciding on the final angle, factor in that the rim will move upward as it dries. The opening angle will be 10° to 20° steeper when dry.

Once the form is thrown, leave it uncovered for a day or two, depending on the humidity. In drier regions it may be necessary to cover the rim with a ring of plastic to keep it from drying too quickly.

Throwing Large

2. Dampen a large bat and smooth the cutout shower curtain on top of the bat.



3. Place the ball of clay onto the bat and pound it into a mound with your hands while the wheel spins.



4. As the wheel spins, use a wooden paddle to further compress and flatten the mound.



5. Finish the process by pounding the clay with your hands again until you get to the diameter you want.





6. Wet your hands and hold a wet sponge in your dominant hand. Press down with both hands to open.



7. Flatten the bottom moving your hands from the center to the edge and back again.



8. Pull up the wall using the index finger on the inside and a sponge and knuckles on the outside.



9. Using a very wet sponge, slowly open the rim. As you angle the wall out, work from the rim down.

Trimming

To trim the platter, you'll need to flip it over. If it's a low, wide form, trying to lift it off of the bat directly and flip it would cause extreme distortion, so sandwiching the piece between two bats works better. To avoid ruining the platter, you may need another person to help flip the big platter onto the second bat to prepare for trimming.

Place a foam sheet on the center of the platter to support the wide bottom while flipping it over. The foam should be taller than your platter rim in order to press against it firmly enough to support it. Cover it with a second bat that's larger than the diameter of the platter (figure 10).

Use a flat surface to help with flipping. Create a pivot point by having one edge of the bat remain in contact with the table. Hold the bats together tightly to prevent slipping, lift one side up and flip the bat sandwich over as quickly as possible, maintaining contact with the pivot point to help steady the process and take off some of the weight (figure 11). This works better than trying to flip it in the air. Peel the shower curtain sheet off (figure 12).

Center the platter on the bat. Its own weight keeps it secured to the bat, so you don't need to place clay coils around the edge.



10. Place a foam sheet onto the center of the plate for support while flipping it over.



11. Rest one edge of the bat on your wheel head as a pivot point, hold the bats tightly, then flip them over.



12. Carefully, peel the shower curtain sheet off of the platter.



13. Trim the outside of the foot ring, mark the interior support ring, then trim between the two rings.

Trim the outside of the foot ring first to define the platter's silhouette. The foot ring itself should be almost as wide as the rim, to allow for support. A center ring prevents potential sagging of the center part, so define that area, then trim away the excess clay between the two rings. The amount you trim away depends on the thickness of the bottom of your platter. For this platter, which started with a bottom thickness of 1 inch, I trim away about $\frac{3}{8}$ of an inch of clay inside of each foot ring, leaving a bottom thickness of just over $\frac{1}{2}$ of an inch. Make sure the inner ring(s) are not taller than the outer ring by checking with a straight edge (figures 13 and 14).

For hanging, carve a deep groove into the outside of the foot ring (figure 15). This is less stressful to the foot ring than puncturing holes. After firing, use a loop of picture hanging wire placed in this groove to hang it.

Flip the platter right-side-up using two bats and the sandwich method again and check the weight and appearance of the foot ring. Before the platter reaches the bone-dry stage, flip the platter occasionally to let it dry out evenly and to prevent warpage. Always move the platter by picking it up with the bat while it dries. Don't pick up the platter by the rim; it may cause warpage or cracks (figure 16).



14. Use a ruler or a level to check that the second foot ring is not taller than the outer ring.



15. If you plan to hang the plate on the wall, carve a deep groove into the outside of the foot ring.



16. Flip the plate back onto a clean, dry bat, and always transport it carefully to avoid warping and cracking.

Firing Tips

- Always place a big platter in the center of the kiln for even heat distribution. The foot of the platter should be completely supported on a level, smooth shelf, otherwise cracking and warping can occur. Don't place the platter so the base spans two shelves. It may help to fire the platter on a thin layer of fine grog or on a waster slab made out of the same clay body to allow for lateral shrinkage during the firing. To prevent the rim from cooling off faster than the center part, which can lead to cracking as the rim contracts more quickly than the rest of the platter, evenly surround the rim with kiln posts. Alternately, when firing low, wide work, make sure there is adequate airspace between the rim of the platter and the shelf above it. Allowing air to flow freely helps to minimize the temperature difference between the middle of the shelf and the outer edge.
- Do not place other objects on the platter during a bisque firing. This can cause it to warp or crack.
- Most of the center cracks happen during the cooling process, not in the heating process. It will help big platters survive the thermal shock if you can slow down the kiln's cooling process, either by ensuring the kiln is fully loaded, or by including a down-firing ramp schedule in your firing program. The weight sometimes makes a big platter stick to the kiln shelf during the glaze firing. Make sure the kiln shelf is covered with kiln wash, and apply a thin layer of alumina hydrate solution to the unglazed foot ring.



Bill Jones received a Bachelor of Fine Arts in studio ceramics from The Ohio State University, and operated a pottery studio during the 1970s. He joined the American Ceramic Society in 1997 to serve as editor of *Pottery Making Illustrated* as well as manage the Ceramic Arts Daily Book program. He currently lives and works in Gambier, Ohio, where he continues to edit ceramic art handbooks and operate Pine Row Studio with his wife, Pamela.



Throwing Techniques is a collection of more than thirty carefully selected projects and techniques from *Pottery Making Illustrated* and *Ceramics Monthly* featuring both intermediate and advanced wheel-throwing techniques. In this book you'll be able to take your throwing skills to the next level as you discover ways to create more complex forms from altered cylinders, throw and assemble multiple parts, construct large pieces, and much more.

Illustrated with hundreds of step-by-step images, each project contains tips and techniques you can use in a variety of ways. Try out Martha Grover's throwing and slab technique to create a variety of forms, use Keith Phillips' ingenious shaker to make endless variations, or follow Rich Briggs' multi-part throwing technique to construct pots bigger than you currently make.

Throwing Techniques provides a wealth of how-to information for you to explore new methods and expand your skills. With so many options, you're sure to find inspiration to last you for years to come.

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