

Work instruction

Pottery Forms



@catchytableware_pottery

A handy work instruction for making beautiful plates and bowls with pottery forms from Pottery Forms Europe

For more information
www.potteryformseurope.com



The choice of clay type / clay body

The choice of clay / clay body is very important. For example, a clay body that is suitable for turning is not always the right choice for making the clay plates that are used for working with pottery forms. In addition, this choice also depends on what you are going to make, how big you are going to work and how high you are going to heat.

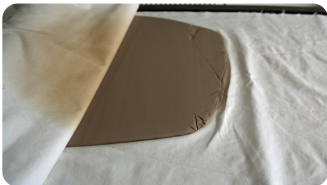
If you use a clay of 0 - 0.2 grog or 0 - 0.5 grog for the larger works or higher fired clay, this clay is slightly firmer and this helps prevent cracks and warping.

Wedging / kneading of the clay



Clay has a memory. Make sure the clay is well wedged / kneaded to remove this memory and increase the plasticity of the clay

The Clay slab



Make a slab of clay with the slab roller or a rolling pin and sticks.

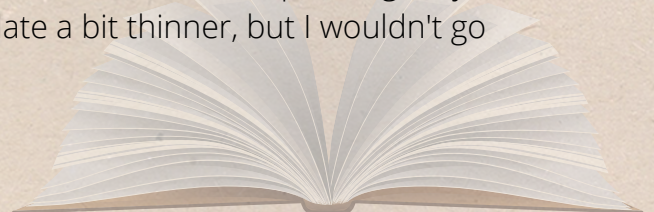
Turn the clay slab in between regularly a quarter turn so the clay is not always stretched in the same direction.

This helps to prevent warping and cracking at a later stage. Use a smooth cloth that you place under the clay in order to be able to lift the clay slab easier when it is still very wet (per example an old sheet).

The thickness of the clay slab depends on the type of clay you use and the shrinkage of that clay (and consequently how high you fire) in combination with your working method.

I usually work with a thickness of +/- 6 mm

The small round and oval shapes are also suitable for use as a pressure mold on a foam plate (foam rubber). In this case (depending on your experience) you can make the plate a bit thinner, but I wouldn't go further than +/- 4 mm.



Rest

Place the slab of clay on a wooden board, preferably unpainted. A waterproof glued plywood sheet works best. This way moisture can pull out of the clay and the slab becomes a bit firmer and easier to use.

The duration depends on the conditions such as temperature and humidity, and of course the condition of the clay. In the summer at 35 degrees and dry air this can be 20/30 minutes rest time, but with very wet clay, a colder room or high humidity this can take up to 2 to 3 hours.

A trick is that you should be able to pick up the clay slab without it tearing.

Compression



Use a rib mud tool to perform compression on the clay plate. Doing this in different directions will help prevent warping and cracking at a later stage.

Turn the clay plate over and do this on the other side as well.

Texture / structure



this is the moment to determine if you want to add structure. Perhaps with an knitted dolly, a roling pin with structure or things from nature.

If you want to use an underglaze transfer, you can do so in this stage. (underglaze transfers can also be added on in a bisque stage)



The Form



Drape the clay slab with the pritty side downwards over the form. Use your hand to gently press the clay towards the form, removing folds and as much air as possible.



After this use a soft mud rib to shape your plate or platter. Work as much as possible from the outside inwards to keep enough clay on the edge of the form, but add enough compression until the shape of the form is visible.

Foot / ring



Use the footmaker to make equal strips of clay. Turn these strips upside down (it is wider on the bottom).

Score the plate / bowl and the strips of clay.

Use some water on top of the scratches to get a better attachment.



Larger plates and bowls (larger than 9,5 inch (+/-24 cm) or bigger) get more than 1 foot or a double ring for support. This to prevent warping of the plate.



You can use the modeling tool to remove some excess clay from the foot or ring.



Rim / lip



If you use a rim template it is easy to use a clay harp or clay needle on the edge of the rim template to define your rim / lip. Be sure to keep the clay harp or clay needle straight.



If you do not have a rim template, you can always determine the rim by hand. If you want to make multiple plates with an equal lip we advise to use the rim tool.

Choose your required width. Set the rim tool on this width. Lock the lever of the rim tool.

Gently move the rim tool in the edge of the pottery form, determine the lip with the needle of the rim tool.

Use a clay needle or a clay knife to cut the clay.

The needle of the rim tool is for marking only. It is not big enough to cut the clay we use the clay needle or clay knife for this.

beveled rim / lip



A lot of people like a somewhat beveled rim / lip.

You will be able to achieve this effect by removing the rim template first.

Put your pottery form with your plate on the round or square spacer.

Gently push the lip down with 1 finger.



Leather hard

Our pottery forms have a beveled edge. They are made in such a way that your plate can dry on the form without any problem. The drying clay will pull up from the form automatically. Wait until your clay is leather hard and the form will pop off automatically.

Leather hard phase is that you can not dent the clay with a finger tip, but should be able to leave a marking with a finger nail.

At the stage of leather hard the form can be released easily.

If your clay bents or deforms during the removing of the pottery form. you are not in the leather hard phase yet and removed the pottery form too fast.

We learned that removing the pottery forms too soon is the main source of warping and deformations of the plates and bowls in the drying phase and bisque firing.

If your plates rip on the form, you waited too long.

Everybody who works with clay a little longer knows how hard it is to be there "at the right moment", but releasing the form at the right moment can not be underestimated.



Make sure that your piece is not too close to a heater or fan. Make sure there is no draft, do not use a blow dryer and do not place it directly in the bright sun.

The total dry time to leatherhard phase is depending on the circumstances of the clay, the temperature and humidity in the room and may depend between 4 to 8 hours.

Equalized drying is very important. Drying under plastic or using bean bags for weight can sometimes result in an unequal drying.

The finishing



Remove the pottery form and place the work with the right way up. With larger forms you can control if there is no bulging. If you waited long enough this will most likely not be the problem. If in spite of all your efforts a light bulging occurred, you can try to fix it in this stage. Gently push the middle of the plate downwards with your flat hand.



Use the surform for an equal / tight edge.
Use the inside curve of the special rounding rib to make a smooth edge on the rim / lip.
Use a sponge to make it smooth. Be aware not to use too much water in this stage for it will crack.





@7leap_of_faith

Now is the time and opportunity to make add under glaze, or mishima technique.

Let your work dry to the bone dry phase. Be sure to dry evenly throughout. I always dry my work in a little green house to ensure (iron open racks and plastic cover over the racks).

When placing your plates and bowls in the kiln, pay attention to the following;

- Let the rims / lip not stick out over the kiln plate. (the air flow on the side of the kiln is much warmer and your plate may warp.
- Do not go to fast to a higher temperature - the clay has to sinter - take your time.
- Do not cool down to fast. For larger plates we recommend a controlled cool down program

**For working with clay there is a general rule;
Take your time, do not rush !**