

ORNAMENTS TIPS

Pam Lake

- Choose clay. I use mostly B Mix because it is smooth and takes the glazes well. You can also use Redstone or your favorite clay.
- Roll out clay to ¼" to less than 3/8" thick. You don't want it too thick or heavy.
- Smooth clay on both sides to get canvas texture out.
- Choose patterns – cookie cutters, birdhouses, hearts, etc.
- Choose textures – doilies, wooden rollers, rubber stamps/mats/rollers, etc.
- Imprint patterns in clay before you cut out your piece to avoid distorting the shape.
- If you're cutting around a pattern, use exacto or other sharp knife. It gives you a cleaner cut and not as much debris on the edges.
- Lay saran wrap or thin plastic like a veggie bag over your clay if you're using a cookie cutter and cut through that. It rounds the edges and gives a nicer finish. Sometimes I put plastic on the bottom to make it easier to lift off the matt.
- After cutting out your ornament, lay it on a ware board. This helps it to set up a little and easier to work with.
- If carving a pattern on your ornament, lay the thin plastic over the clay and use a pencil or other pointed tool to imprint your pattern. This gives you a smoother pattern without rough edges you have to clean up later.
- Use slip to add texture and dimension to trees/wreaths/Santa's beard.
- Don't use a wet sponge to smooth the edges. Again, use the thin plastic, lay it on the edge and rub your finger over it to ease the edge. Or you can dampen your finger a bit and smooth it that way. Remember, if you leave the edge rough, it will be worse after being fired.
- Don't forget to put the year/date and your signature/stamp on back.
- Most important – don't forget to put a hole in your ornament. Determine what type ribbon, cord, wire, etc and make the appropriate size hole. Remember, it is going to shrink so allow for that. Don't make a tiny hole and expect to get a cord through it.
- I use straws to cut the holes – it's a cleaner cut and doesn't make a blob on the back side. Keep different sizes of straws for different applications.
- You may also use wire for your hanger on your ornaments. Make sure it is appropriate for high fire.

- Dry flat ornaments between two ware boards. It only takes 2 – 3 days to dry depending on the thickness.
- If you need to smooth them a little, you can use a damp sponge or lightly sand
- If you're using under glazes or Stroke & Coat, you can do that now or after low firing
- When you low fire the ornaments, as long as there isn't glaze on them, you can stack them 3-4 high. Avoid putting them on shards on the shelves even if you have a bunch. It is easier for the kiln team to place them around larger pieces on the kiln shelves
- If you're going to dip them, use wax resist on the bottom and about 1/8" to 1/4" up the sides. Don't forget to wipe them off before putting on the shelf. If you're hand painting the top only, no need to wax resist. Use wire hook in glazing area to dip ornaments.
- Make sure if you dip, clean out the hole well. It will glaze shut if you don't.
- When putting glazed pieces on the high fire shelf, same goes for not putting on large shards. If you glaze them correctly, you don't need a shard and kiln team can get smaller ones in around the larger pieces. If any doubt whether you need a shard or not, err on the side of caution. Sand the bottoms of all pieces after high fire
- If you borrow cutters, textures, etc from someone else, make sure it's clean and ready to use when you return it
- When putting on your ribbon hanger, put it on so it will hang straight on the tree
- Have fun and get creative with different shapes and glazes. Use your imagination!!!