



Day 14



Salt Dough Ornaments: Nutcracker, Pippin, Nutcracker Head, and Brandon & Mom's Black Bear

This post is CHOCK full of memories, fate, and good times and illustrates how amazing Flickr friends are.

In the photos on this post, you will see the red colored article torn from an issue of Ladies Home Journal circa 1965. It is an article about ornaments made from a salt dough called "baker's clay". Baker's clay is nothing more than a dough made from flour, salt and water. You knead the dough like a bread dough and after letting it rest a few minutes, you have a clay that can be shaped and baked.

That same red page was in my Mother's red and white checkered Betty Crocker® cookbook, all folded up, with the ingredients and brief instructions written on the back wherever there was space.

When I found the recipe in her cookbook, I was in Junior High School. My friends and I made ornaments every year and gave them as gifts. You can paint them or color them with permanent markers. Painting these is difficult because they are not flat.

One year, I decided to add food coloring to the dough itself (inspired by PlayDoh®). It made a much better clay for what we were doing and no added last step of painting to deal with.

In 1980, I made edible cookie dough in a similar way. 11 years later, based on this design premise, I launched a successful bakery business featuring edible ornament cookies.

www.flickr.com/photos/fondant_dot_com/6482449167/in/photostream

I had forgotten all about this page and my Mom's connection to the salt dough ornaments...until this year when I saw Flickr friend Bryan (CheshireCat666) post the familiar page in his photostream here:

www.flickr.com/photos/cheshirecat666/5909529034/in/faves-tothepublic/



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The page was from an old Ladies Home Journal given to him by mutual Flickr pal Michele (MADsLucky13).

Little did I know, but...after Bryan saw that I had a connection to this particular article, he colluded with Flickr-ers Michele and Joe ("Cody") to get this magazine article to me without me knowing it. I was so SHOCKED when I opened the tube from Bryan and saw this tumble out. It is now framed in an antique Large-format Contact Printing Frame (old photography darkroom equipment that I collect) and is hanging in my house.

After I posted the framed article, Flickr friend Mary (mrybuckler) sent me the related article that was published one year prior to the one Bryan sent me. Bryan's is the update article for the info on the article sent by Mary! I had never seen it but realized my Mother must have had this torn out at some point as well. The proportions for the dough and instructions are the same.

You can see the ornaments my son and I made sitting on top of the articles in the photo:

- The painted bear with the yellow yarn hanger was made with a cookie cutter by my son Brandon when he was 3 (1983).
- The dog is a painted ornament I made depicting our cocker spaniel, Pippin - it is dated 1979.
- The Nutcracker was made with tinted salt dough. It is not dated but I think maybe it is the earliest - probably made in 1976. I presented this very ornament at my first meeting with Neiman-Marcus back in 1992 - they placed an order for 200 Nutcracker shaped cookies. That means this ornament was 15 years old when I showed it to the Neiman's buyer and I still have it 20 years later.

Things made with this dough really, really last! And nibbly critters will not eat them because of the salt.

Thank you again to Flickr friends, Bryan, Mary, Michele, and Joe! I love you guys!!!!

Salt "Dough" for decorations

***** do not double or halve this recipe*****

- 4 cups All Purpose Flour (careful not to use self-rising flour)
- 1 cup table salt (the fine stuff - not the larger-grained salt like Kosher or Sea Salt)
- 1-1/2 cups cold water

Mix together the dry ingredients very well. Add the water. Mix till you get a dough-like consistency.

Dump onto a floured surface and knead as you would bread dough.

If it is too dry add a few drops of water. If too loose, add flour.

Knead for 5 minutes. It should not be sticky and should not crack when you take a large chunk and bend it.

Place the kneaded dough in a Tupperware® container and keep sealed while you work with it.

If you would like to tint the dough, use gel food coloring.

Shape the dough immediately. If using for ornaments, be sure to remember to insert a paper clip so you can hang it later.

This dough gets funky after about 4 hours and there is no way to revive it - either use it all or toss it out.

Bake in a low slow oven. The idea is to dry out the ornaments, not to get any color on them.