

Basic Millefiori Spiral Flower

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Polymer clay is, as the name implies, a pliable, bendable polymer compound for artists and crafters. It's not true clay - clay is fine particles of silicate suspended in water, whereas polymer clay is fine particles of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) suspended in plasticizer - but it can be used much like clay.

What makes polymer clay special is its versatility. It comes in dozens of colors, and you can blend clays together like paints to make your own colors. Since the color is inherent in the particles, you can also work two or more colors together without blending them, if you prefer, for special effects such as cane working and marbling. The clay's pliability and ductility let you use techniques from glasswork, textile arts, and sculpture. Polymer clay doesn't dry out, so you can sculpt and form it without worrying about a time limit.

Caneworking is a technique that was originally used in glassworking for making complex designs. A cane is a log or cylinder of clay that has a design running through it, so each slice of the cane - the cross-section - contains the design. You can make a large design that's easy to handle, and then reduce the size of the cane by pressing or rolling it so the cane becomes longer and thinner and the design becomes tiny and delicate. Because of the ductility of the clay, the design stays intact no matter how small you make it.

Canes can be made of any design at all - geometrics, landscapes, faces, quilt patterns, or anything else. The cane can be round, square, triangular, or any other regular shape.

You can use a single slice of your cane, or decorate a bead with a veneer of slices from the same cane (a technique called "millefiori", which means "a thousand flow slices of different sizes, cut from the same cane at different stages of red simple canes together to make more complex ones.

In this tutorial we will be making a basic spiral millefiori flower and then decorate a small glass vessel.



out



Materials:

Working space, clean and smooth (ceramic/glass tile is great)

4 packs of polymer clay in 4 colors.

Cutting blade

Brayer

Ruler

Pasta machine – recommended

Liquid polymer clay (for attaching the flower to the glass)

Baby wipes.

Small glass vessel

Pasta Machine

There are few brands of pasta machines; some are different in setting then others.

When I say thickest setting choose yours accordingly whether it's 1 or 9.

When it comes to working with these canes: cutting & shaping, I tend to let them rest for a week or so, especially if you work with a softer brand of polymer clay. I always use a sharp, clean and stiff blade to cut them, this way minimal distortion will occur. When I cut the cane, I turn it a bit after every cut, this way I am certain that the nice shape stay in place and not distort.



Cut 1/3 of a pack from 2 colors.



Start by conditioning the lighter clay, this is important as the darker clay colors tend to color the hands a bit and the lighter clay might get pigment and will not look clean.

Clean your hands with baby wipes if you see they are not clean enough, white tend to catch every piece of fiber/dirt.



Make a ball between your hands



Roll it to a marshmallow shape.



Press on your marshmallow and shape it to a rectangle.

Repeat these steps with your other color

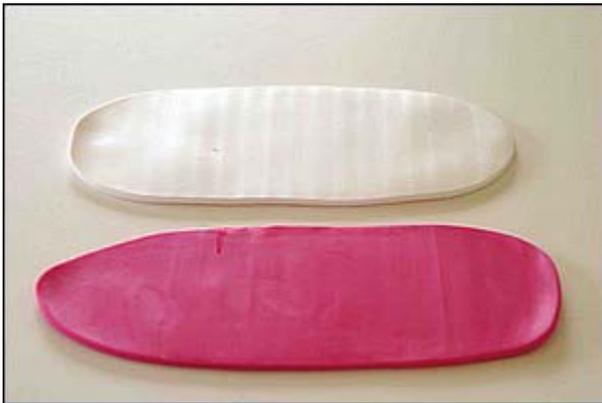


After you prepared both rectangles, flatten them a bit before they get in the pasta machine. The machine cannot handle thick clay, so using the brayer helps keep the pasta machine work properly for many years.

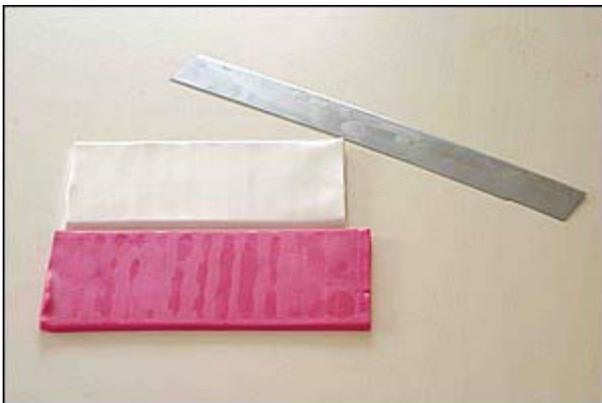


Roll in the pasta machine in the thickest setting.

Cut around to straighten lines.



One of the sheets should be 0.5 cm longer than the other one.





Put the short sheet on the longer one.



Start rolling the 2 layers like a jelly roll



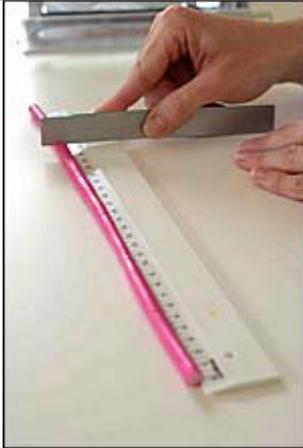
Final result – spiral jellyroll millefiori cane.



Start the reduction by surrounding it in the middle with your hands and pressing very gently, making an hourglass shape. Then gradually move out to the ends, until the cane is even again.



Continue doing this until the cane is the size you want, or until it's thin enough to roll on your work surface.



We want to make 6 petals from the jellyroll cane. Roll the cane to 30 cm long, cut across on the sides. If the cane got short again, stretch it a bit to make it 30 cm again.

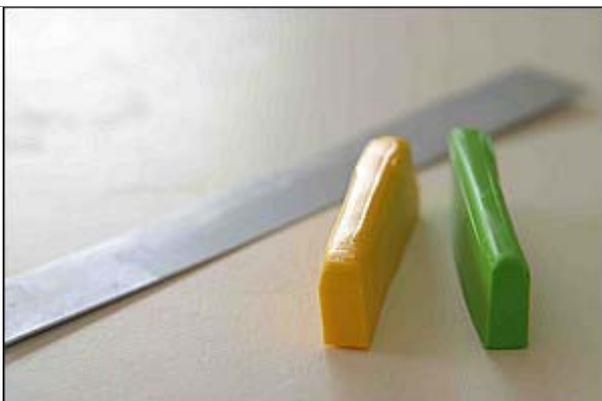
Take your ruler and measure a small mark every 5 cm

$$5 \times 6 = 30 \text{ cm}$$

Move the roller.
Cut.

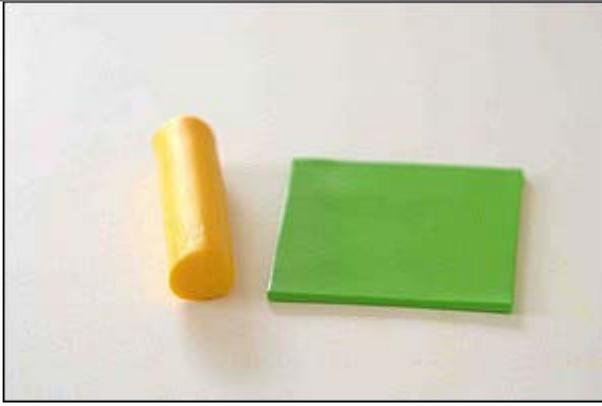


We have 6 jellyroll canes to use as petals.



Let's prepare the center of the flower.

Cut 1/8 pack from the other 2 colors you have.
Condition.



From one of the colors form a short log, from the other a medium-thin sheet using your pasta machine.

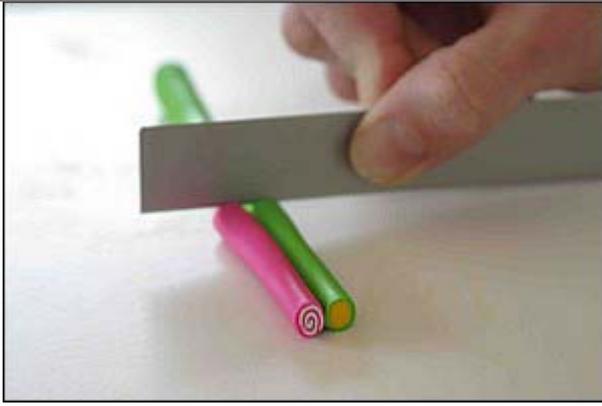


Wrap the inner log with the wrapping sheet. Cut in the joint.



Reduce the new center cane to match the diameter of the 6 jellyroll petals. Only when the diameter will be the same, the 6 petals will surround the center perfectly.





When you reach the right diameter, cut to match the length (5 cm)



Place the 6 petals around the center cane.

Press lightly to tighten a little bit. Do not reduce this cane or it will lose the nice flower shape.



Using a sharp blade, cut thin slices of your new flower canes.



Add a touch of liquid polymer clay to act as an adhesive. Place the millefiori slice on the glass. Press to tight.



You can use as many millefiori canes as you like, you can put them close to one another or with spaces – you are the designer!

Curing is the process of heating the clay to make a finished piece. During curing, the temperature causes chemical changes in the clay, making it hard and strong. Polymer clay cure at low temperatures (Recommendations on this vary, and you'll notice that different brands of clay call for different curing temperatures, check the package wrap), so you don't need a special kiln – you can cure it in a kitchen oven.



Place your nice canes in a plastic/metal box and the leftovers in another box. There are many uses for leftover/scrap clay! I will be happy to share some with you on my next tutorials.



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