

- Suggested story concept
- Wrote story and instructions

Knit Knacks

WITH A PROJECT DESIGNED BY AUDRA MANNING

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Knitwear and jewelry designer Audra Manning (in white) is just one of the enthusiastic knitters who meet here each week.

Every Tuesday night, knitters gather at the Knit Cafe on Toronto's trendy Queen Street West to share several hours of good conversation and stitching, and their tips and techniques. Anyone is welcome to stop by, and the group embraces stay-at-home new moms, as well as a geophysicist, a horticulturalist, a lawyer, a pharmacist and a translator (among others), says one of the regulars, Audra Manning. Even out-of-town visitors drop in from time to time.

A knitwear and jewelry designer herself, Audra says that occasionally

"there are so many people some have to sit on the floor." For her, the café is "our refuge, our corner bar, a place with no hassles or demands," where the lively talk runs from sex through family, good books and movies, medical problems and – oh, yes – knitting.

Annette Waurick, another regular and a magazine art director by day, laughs when asked if any men show up. "A goth used to come with his groovy wife, and he knitted skeleton dolls and spiders.... He was very talented. Another one was looking for a girlfriend, but we heard

he found one elsewhere; he isn't coming anymore."

Girlfriends aside, the knitters who bring their yarn and needles out to this and countless similar groups springing up across North America find much more than knits and purls. And, since most are chic women in their 20s and 30s, it's not crafts for their grandkids. It's the friendships and conversations, Annette and Audra agree, that keep them coming back.

Inspired to get together with a few of your own friends to knit? Start with a simple, stylish one-ball scarf designed by Audra. ▶



FELTED SCARF

Before felting, scarf is approx 127 x 19 cm (50 x 7½ ins); finished scarf is approx 110 x 9 cm (43½ x 3½ ins).

YOU NEED:

1 ball Patons Classic Wool Merino (100 g) pure wool yarn in desired colour

One pair of 9 mm needles

Tapestry needle

Zippered pillowcase

Clean tennis ball

25 mL (2 tbsp) mild liquid dish soap such as Ivory or Palmolive

Dressmaker's chalk pencil and 3 to 4 cm (1¼- to 1½-ins) diameter jar or glass

Sharp scissors

TO MAKE:

Cast on 24 sts. Work even in garter st (knit every row) until approx 1 m (39½ ins) of yarn is left; cast off loosely and fasten off.

TO FINISH:

With tapestry needle, sew in ends. Set top-loading washer to smallest load size, hot-water wash and cold-water rinse. Zip scarf into pillowcase, then place in washer, along with tennis ball and dish soap. When cycle is completed, remove scarf from pillowcase, then flatten and straighten it to remove any wrinkles. Measure scarf to determine if second cycle is necessary to achieve desired size (felting is not an exact science). If so, zip it back into pillowcase and run through another complete wash cycle *without* soap. Remove scarf from pillowcase and place on flat surface (away from direct heat or sunlight), straightening and stretching to at least 106.5 cm (42 ins) long, if necessary; let dry.

With chalk pencil, trace circles around jar onto scarf, tracing 1 circle 5 to 7.5 cm (2 to 3 ins) from each end, then tracing 7 more at evenly spaced intervals in between. With tip of scissors, pierce each circle, then cut out along chalk lines. ●



Designer's Tips

- You can experiment with other yarns, but, for felting, you need to use pure wool. Different colours and brands of yarn will felt differently; more washing cycles may be required for some.
- Placing the scarf inside a pillowcase keeps the fibres from clogging your machine; the tennis ball (or you can use a heavy pair of denim jeans) "beats" the scarf, speeding up the felting process.
- When the felting is complete, the fabric will be smooth and firm, and the individual stitches will not be visible.

- Find more of Audra's crafts at www.designsbyaudra.com.
- Find a knitting group in your area at www.canknit.com/guilds.html or www.knittingcircle.ca/circle_directory.html or start your own!