

Rustic Pottery

by Carol Ann LaJeunesse

Pottery is one of the most ancient art forms that dates back to prehistoric times. Artifacts have been found at archeological sites throughout the world and the development of pottery technology was essential part of the growth of civilization across the globe. The invention of pottery allows for advances in food and produce storage, cooking, and even the development of beer and wine production. Most of the pottery found at these ancient sites was dried, porous unfired clay. Firing clay requires a very high temperature of heat to adequately bisque the piece making it non-porous. This high temperature firing was not developed until many years later.

Pottery is created using several methods. Most people are familiar with pottery that have been formed using a pottery wheel, which allows a potter to create beautiful pots, bowls, cups, plates and many other pieces. The potter engages a process that is referred to as “throwing” the clay onto a rotating wheel, centering the clay, and employing some water to form a desired piece via control of centrifugal force. The pottery created on a potter’s wheel is uniform and even. However, the pottery wheel was not invented until many years later. So during these pre-wheel times, pottery was hand built or sculpted. In ancient times, the earliest techniques in crafting pottery pieces do not use the wheel and are completely made by hand. These techniques include the coil and pinch pot methods, hand sculpting and slab work. Today, these methods are part of the rustic pottery movement.

Each piece whether from the pottery wheel or hand-built must be dried before it can be fired in the kiln. This prevents cracking during the heating process. The first firing is known as the bisque firing. The temperatures in the kiln can

exceed 3,000 degrees. It is during the period after the first firing that an additional process known as glazing is performed. Glazing provides color and sometimes textures to the finished piece. Glazing includes traditional glazes, underglazes, and slips, which is clay mixed with a glaze, and each treatment adds a different and unique quality to the finished piece. After the first firing, the potter must decide on the desired glaze to finish the piece. Although the piece may be left unglazed, glazing seals the piece for culinary or decorative use. The final intensity of color of the piece is determined by the kind of clay used. One glaze may be an entirely different shade on different clay mixtures. Ancient potters lacked advanced high temperature kilns and advances in temperature control and fired their pieces using wood fires or even sun baking. The result was a porous pottery that often has variations in color and texture. Today, rustic pottery uses similar processes to generate pottery that has this primitive feel. Rustic pottery creates a more organic, natural, and sometimes uneven looking piece. The hand-builder works with the clay using forms or simply sculpting to achieve the desired art piece. Rustic pottery typically includes earthy components such as the inclusion of leaves, shells, and other natural material imprinted into the surface as well as including other textures. In addition to the organic textured and structural elements, to me rustic pottery has a lovely ancient looking quality that allows me a greater connection to the past as well as the future. As a potter rustic pottery is enjoyable to create and satisfying to display in my home and use in my kitchen.

In 2010 Carol Ann LaJeunesse decided to take classes to learn the art of pottery at the Art Alliance in Greensboro, NC. Carol started by throwing clay using the wheel. At a later time she developed an interest in hand building and since has created many pieces using this method. Her pieces are unique and one of

a kind. Carol continues taking classes at the Art Alliance at the Cultural Center in Greensboro.