

# Native American Clay Pot & Air Dry Clay Recipe

Sometime during the early period of formalized agricultural practice, storage vessels for seeds and grains were needed. Hierarchies developed for the size, shape, and decoration of the pots for storing the best seeds, for different varieties of seeds, and so forth. Other hierarchical shapes developed historically for other practical reasons. Women were probably the gatherers (as men were the hunters), and women became the chief pottery makers.



Initially, hand-built vessels were made solely for utilitarian purposes, with little consideration for artistry. Most very early containers were unadorned, except for the texture of the coils and pinches, or indented textures from pointed sticks. Not much attention was paid to symmetry.

Later, decorative designs began to appear on Native American pots. Anglos have long struggled to find meaning in these designs, but Native Americans are reluctant to verbalize their meanings. If the symbols are important rather than mere embellishment, outsiders are not likely to be privy to the potter's intent. Native Americans do not divulge sacred traditions, ceremonial rituals, or symbols. From the earliest times, Native American tribes have venerated life, nature, birds and other animals, humans, and gods. Realistic and abstracted interpretations of these mentors probably form the basic elements of Native American designs for all utilitarian and ritual objects.

Resource: <https://www.cla.purdue.edu/academic/rueffschool/waaw/peterson/Petersonessay2.html>

## Clay Pinch Pot

A pinch pot is a traditional clay handbuilding technique that has been used for thousands of years. Follow the directions below to make your own. To get started have a ball of air dry clay that fits in your palm and a clean workspace.

- 1 Roll the clay into a ball, the shape does not have to be perfect.
- 2 Rest the ball of clay in your non-dominant hand. Use your thumb in your dominant hand to gently press down into the clay. The indent should be near the bottom, but not go through. The goal is not a donut - if you make a donut, just reform the clay into a ball and try again.
- 3 To form the piece into a pot gently pinch around the edges of the vessel. To make the piece wide, gently pull the edges out while pinching. Try to keep even pressure while pinching which will help create uniform edges.
- 4 Flatten the bottom by gently pressing the bottom against a flat surface.
- 5 Use a pencil or a toothpick to carve designs into the surface of the pot.
- 6 Allow the pot to dry, which can take up to 3 days. Each day flip the pot upside down so air can access all sides or dry the pots on a cookie sheet.
- 7 Once dry, the pot can be painted with watercolor or watered down acrylics.

## DIY Air Dry Clay

### Materials:

1 cup baking soda  
1/2 cup corn starch  
3/4 cup water  
Measuring cup  
Sauce pan  
Spatula

### Directions:

Put all of the ingredients in the sauce pan. Put the pot on low to medium heat. Stir the mixture to combine all ingredients and keep stirring regularly, ensure that you are scraping the bottom of the pot. After a few minutes the mixture will start to clump together and once it looks like the consistency of cookie dough transfer the clay mixture to a bowl until it is cool to the touch. Once the clay is cool, start kneading the clay. To knead the dough form it into a ball-like shape, push down and away from you, fold the clay back over and repeat. If the mixture is too wet sprinkle a mixture of baking soda and corn starch onto your work surface and continue kneading. The clay will store in an air tight container for up to 2 weeks.

