

Lentils, Anyone? By [Valerie Aharoni](#) [Adobe Acrobat version](#)

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Those wonderful little legumes come in a variety of shapes and flavors. They are hearty additions to soups and stews, and I find them particularly appetizing in rice dishes. But to hang 'em around my neck? You bet! With polymer clay you can do anything.

When I first saw Gwen Gibson's silk-screened lentils, I was speechless. Then Dotty came out with her book, *Creative Ways with Polymer Clay*, with a chapter on these elusive shapes. Not being a jewelry maker I had not paid much attention to beads and baubles. Well, that has changed. The sublime contour and sensual colors I have seen in lentil beads has consumed my creative hours. Initial attempts were dismal failures. The following is what I have found works for me and I hope that it will spark some excitement in others.

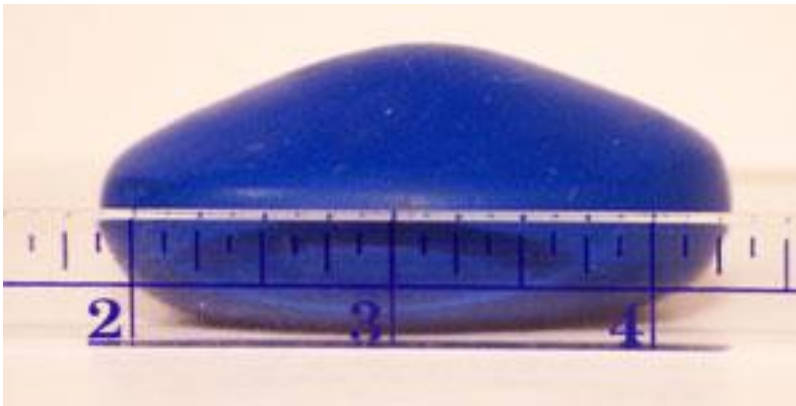


Here are some examples of lentil beads. They can be created with a different design on each side, so you can make two necklaces in one.



Supplies:

- clay
- canes or other favorite decoration techniques
- round cookie cutter
- release agent such as baby powder or cornstarch
- pasta machine or other flattening device



Step One:

To start, you need to have a gently domed, solid shape. Size isn't important, but shape is. The dome portion is what will determine the curvature of your lentil.

I was unable to find anything with the proper curvature **and** ease of use, so I made and cured my own domed shape. The picture shows approximate size.



Step Two:

Use the domed shape to create a mold from scrap clay. Be careful to allow enough clay on the bottom for support.

I used baby cornstarch as a release agent.

Cure.

I made several molds so I could make lots of beads at the same time.



Step Three:

Roll some clay on a thinner setting (I use 3 or 4 on my pasta machine).

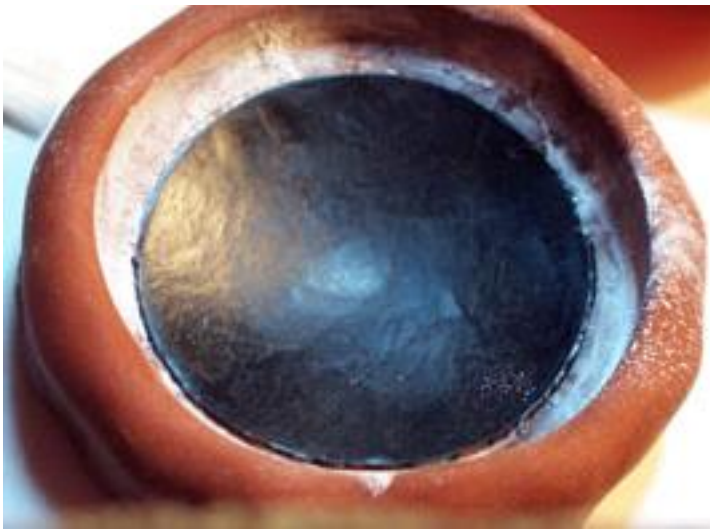
Using a circular cutter, cut as many pieces as you will need, remembering that for every lentil bead, you need two pieces.

I have used caned clay with great success, as well as clay painted with acrylic inks.



Step Four:

Dust the molds generously with release agent.



Lay a circle of clay into the mold and gently position so you get a nice curve.

Cure.



Step Five:

Now comes the amazing part. You will notice that the edges of the circular pieces just do not seem to line up when put together. This took me some time to figure (yup, brain cells have slowed significantly!).



Lay the circular piece on a 12-inch square piece of wet/dry sandpaper you've placed on a flat surface, like a tile, in a sink or large basin. Using a circular motion, sand until the edge of the circular clay is paper-thin (here's where using a #3 or #4 thinness sheet of clay becomes valuable -- it saves a lot of sanding time).

Step Six:



Using cyanocrylate glue, glue two pieces together. I like making two necklaces in one by have two different complementary designs on reverse sides.

Step Seven:

Back to sanding. Sand the edge to even any areas that did not fit together exactly. Using progressive grits to sand the lentil.

I usually start with 320 grit and will progress to 1500 grit. Buff and buff some more!

The natural sheen of the clay is what I like, but you can avoid some work by using a finish of your choice.

Step Eight:

This is the exacting part. Using a drill (I use a hand-held Dremel. The non-powered method with a pin vise does not work for me. It may for you, so by all means try it.) Place two holes on opposite sides. I do not worry about the angle of the hole, just placement.

If beads are designed with different finishes on reverse sides, the bead will need to hang in a pre-determined orientation. Therefore the drilled holes should be placed just above center. (Hint: Make extra beads! On occasion the drill has slipped.)

Step Nine:

Stringing: On larger lentils it is difficult to get the stringing material to pass through both holes. I have found that tightly wrapping the end of my cord with a thin (22ga) wire works well. The wire is thin and long enough to be shaped to pass through the lentil easily.

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