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Beginners' Corner by Deborah Hayes

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Well, I guess fall is officially here. Bright days with a hint of briskness, and nights when soup seems like a good thing to cook.

Since there is less daylight for outdoor activities, fall and winter are great seasons for claying. Gift giving is right around the corner, and something you have made yourself is the best gift idea of all!

Barbara in Houston is making hairsticks, and has some questions about them:

I am in a hair ornament swap, and wonder, if you were making hair sticks, would you just use totally clay or cover chopsticks? Or if you were using the blank metal hair clips, would you cover the clips and bake or make your creation and glue on after baking?

I also wondered if you might cover the metal hair clip with silk ribbon so that it wouldn't damage your hair, then glue on the clay design?

It would depend, I think, on whether the person was going to use the hairsticks as ornaments, or as functional hair-holders.

I understand that plain clay will work fine, as long as it doesn't need to be strong enough to actual hold up lots of hair. Plain clay, especially if you use one of the stronger types, would be fine to stick through a bun or ponytail, I should think.

Wire armatures have also been suggested to strengthen the clay structure a bit.

But, if the hairsticks were to be used for holding up long, thick hair, I would suggest using chopsticks as bases for the clay. My hair, for instance, is so thick and heavy, I need to use real rubber bands to make a ponytail. I would have to use heavy-duty hairsticks, as well.

When I cover barrettes, I bake the design on the barrette to retain the curved shape it needs, then glue it on after it cools.

Glue should also work to hold the clay design onto a ribbon-covered barrette back as well. I hadn't thought of that...it would add a whole new dimension to the design as well!

Is it too late for me to get into your swap? LOL

You can see one version of chopstick use in the [March issue of Polyzine](#)

Deb

Dear Deb:

Mokume gane-- Please tell this newbie what this is.

Love, helensharvest

Good question, helensharvest.

Mokume Gane is an ancient Japanese technique for laminating different metals into a single layer. Mokume means "wood eye" and gane means "metal".

The polymer clay community has borrowed the technique, and now (in our usage), it has come to mean the technique of layering clay, usually translucent, with metal leaf, or other colors of clay.

When the "pad" is finished, and compressed, thin layers are sliced off on angles, with each cutting showing different parts of each layer. The layers are then used in the desired way, usually to cover some object, or as part of a collage.

There are dozens, if not more, examples on the web. For one way to make a mokume gane pad using pearlescent inks, just go to the [August issue of Polyzine](#).

I wish all our American readers a wonderful Thanksgiving, whether you are home or abroad. It is November 22 this year, and I know that among the things I appreciate, I will give thanks for my friends here online and among polymer clay interest groups worldwide. And of course, I am especially thankful for our beautiful granddaughter, Mary Frances.

Deborah