
Kool-Aid Dyed Yarn with Melanie Falick

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Overview

- I've always loved to play with color and dye yarn. There's lots of ways to dye yarn in your kitchen that are really easy. I'm gonna show you how to take undyed yarn, mix it with Kool-Aid, and make this beautiful magic happen. (lively, bouncy music) (bouncy, playful music)

Chapter 2 - Materials

Materials

- To dye a yarn with Kool-Aid, you need one skein of undyed wool, or any fiber from an animal. You'll need Kool-Aid. You need two to four packs of Kool-Aid for every two ounces of yarn that you have. You need a contrasting yarn that you can use to tie your skeins. A scissor to cut the yarn, a bowl to soak your yarn in, a stock pot to simmer it on the stove, spoon for stirring, and you'll need some kind of drying rack. I'm just going to put this dowel over my kitchen sink which is an easy way to do it.

Chapter 3 - Dye Yarn

Prep yarn for dyeing

- Yarn comes in lots of different forms: balls, skeins, hanks. In order to dye it with Kool-Aid, you need to use it in this form, which is just a loosely-tied skein. If your yarn comes in a figure-eight form, then you can open up the figure-eight, and it will look like this. But we're going to use this yarn, this Northampton bulky. I'm gonna show you how to make it into a loosely-tied hank like this. Right here, I have the other half of what I used to create this, and I know it'll make about two ounces. I'm gonna show you how to make this skein. I'm just unwrapping it a little bit. Now, if you're doing it by yourself, this is the method you use. This is one method that you can use. Grab the end of the yarn and start wrapping it around your elbow. You do not want it to be too tight, or else you won't be able to move your arm. And it'll be hard to even get it off. I'm just wrapping it around, wrapping it around. Now, if you have a friend that you're doing this with, and I imagine you'd be doing this probably with kids, then one person can hold their arms up, straight up vertically, and the other person can wrap the yarn around their hands, and that's kind of a fun way to do it, and I think lots of people have great memories of doing things like that with their moms or grandmothers. Or another way to do it if you're doing it on your own is to use the back of a chair and just loosely hold the first end of the yarn on one side of the chair and then wrap around. You don't want to lose track of the beginning of the yarn, so when you do that, you just want to make sure you're conscious of where you're putting it. Right now, with this method, I am holding the end of the yarn. If you lose it, it's not a big deal. You just have to go searching for it, because when you're finished wrapping, you're gonna loosely tie the beginning end, and the end that you get to when you finish. Another way to do this if you're working on your own is to do it around the back of a chair that has a straight back with two pieces sticking up, and you would basically tie loosely the beginning of the yarn on one side, do all of your wrapping, and then when you finish, find that beginning tie, and just undo it, and then you're gonna tie the two ends of the yarn at that point. I'm almost finished now, and I'll show you how to tie those two ends. Here. That's nice. You want to make sure that this doesn't get too tight. Then the dye might not penetrate. You want to try throughout this process to not tangle

up the yarn. After you tie the two ends of the yarn that you used, then you just take a contrasting yarn, and you cut pieces of it. I'd say about that long. That's about nine inches. It's not really important that it's a specific measurement. You just want to be able to tie it around the skein loosely. I'm just making a small knot here. You want it to stay around the yarn, but you don't want it to be tight, because if it was tight, then the dye doesn't penetrate there. I'm gonna cut another piece of yarn now. I'm just gonna tie it around. Again, I make a knot that I think will hold, but doesn't press up against the yarn. You see with that one, there's a little bit of extra there. It'll make it a little easier to handle. I can tell you from experience that I've dealt with tangled yarn, and I always think, "Oh, it's not gonna get tangled," and then it does. I try to be a little extra cautious with this part of the process. Now, if you're doing this with kids and you're doing multiple skeins of yarn, and everybody wants to know which skein is theirs, which is usually important to kids. When you use the contrasting yarn, you can just use a different color for each kid, so that way, when it comes out of the pot, you'll know. But you do have to notice that these colors, the contrasting yarn, is gonna get dyed as well, so you have to keep track of that. Another thing that you can do if you don't feel like you'll be able to keep track of that, you might have kids arguing over whose skein is whose, is that you can just take this tail from when you tied the beginning and the end together, and you can say, "Susie's yarn has one knot "in the end of the tail, and Johnny's yarn has two "in the end of the tail." Just whatever you need to do if you think it's important to the people involved to be able to identify one person's yarn from another. Once you have your skein, what you need to is soak it in water, and we have prepared here a bowl of cool water. You basically just put the yarn in the water. Kind of press it down. It's gonna want to float up in the beginning, but you're gonna leave it for a minimum of 30 minutes. If you pass by during that 30 minutes, just try to press it down. You just need enough water that you feel like all of the yarn is going to get saturated. When that happens, that yarn becomes much receptive to the dye, so it's pretty important that you take the time to soak the yarn. If you're working with kids and you don't think they're gonna be patient or you don't think they're gonna wanna make these skeins, then this, you might want to do this in advance, and have them come in at this point after the 30 minutes.

Stovetop dyeing

- So my yarn has been soaking for a little over 30 minutes. So now I can actually mix up my dye and get started with the actual dyeing process. I have two stock pots here, because we're actually gonna do two different colors. Start out with the first one. I think we're gonna do two lemonade and one pink lemonade. These are both pretty subtle colors. So you can imagine the lemonade is yellowy, and the pink lemonade is a little bit pink. So we'll see what happens. I have about 4 1/2 quarts of water in this stock pot. It's not important that it be an exact amount, but you want enough water so that the yarn can really be in the water and can move around a little bit. You don't want it to be crowded. You wanna stir the dye before you put the yarn in, because throughout the process you wanna be as gentle as possible with your yarn. Because if you mangle your yarn or if you agitate it, it's more likely to felt and tangle. So when you pull it out, it's good to pull it out from one of the cords that you tied to hold it. Again, it's just an effort to keep it from getting all twisted around. So just to not drip too much on the counter, I'll squeeze it a little. Gently drop it into the water. So I'll put this on the stove. Because I wanted to show you more than one color, I actually soaked some extra yarn so that we could get two stock pots going. I do wanna also point out, we soak the yarn here and then we're putting it into another pot of water. You wanna keep the temperature of the water just consistently cool. You don't want yarn going in hot water and cold

water or anything like that. And you always want to put your yarn into the water. You don't ever wanna pour water onto your yarn. So I'm gonna do three packets of grape for this one. And I know that my skeins are about two ounces. And as I said, you're gonna use, I find that two to four packets of Kool-Aid per two ounces of yarn is a good amount. Obviously, more Kool-Aid is gonna make a darker color. Less is gonna make a lighter color. It's kind of interesting because to know when your yarn is done and it's been dyed, you wait until the water is clear. Some colors, I found, stay just a tiny bit cloudy, the water does. But a lot of the colors do become perfectly clear. So I have my extra skein of yarn that I soaked. Try to remember to pick it up by one of your cords. Now I'm going to gently place my yarn in the water. And you can already see if I pull it out, it's starting to turn very light purple. So that Kool-Aid stuff works quickly. It's kind of funny to imagine what our stomachs look like if we drink it. Alright, so I'm gonna put this on the stove now. Okay, I'm gonna turn this on to a low simmer. (stove ignitor clicks) Okay, that's too high. I want it pretty low. I say a low simmer, but it's at just barely a simmer is what you want. And then you're gonna leave it on the stove for up to 30 minutes, approximately. The way you'll know that it's done is that the water will be clear. So now I'll just turn this one on. (stove ignitor clicks) Very low simmer. Now while it's simmering, you should keep an eye on it, look at it from time to time. You can stir it gently a couple of times, 'cause you wanna make sure that all of the yarn gets dyed, and that the dye actually penetrates all of the fiber. But you don't wanna be rough with it at all, and you don't wanna stir it a lot because it'll get tangled and it might felt. It's been about 15 minutes, so I'm gonna check the yarn. Here we have our lemonade and pink lemonade color, which is coming along nicely. It's a really pretty light peach. And the water is a little bit cloudy still. I found that sometimes with these light colors, the cloudiness doesn't go away. But we'll leave it for a little while longer to see if there's any more dye there. And now I'll check the grape. It's definitely looking purple. But this one looks like it still has a long time to go. Or maybe 10 or 15 more minutes, at least. 'Cause the water is still pretty dark. I'm gonna raise the temperature just a little bit. But I wanna keep an eye on it because sometimes if you go too far and then it starts boiling, that's not a good thing. But we'll just wait about another 15 minutes to see if that's done.

Sun dyeing

- While our yarn is simmering, I'm gonna show you another neat technique. You can also dye yarn with Kool-Aid the same way that you make sun tea. You put your Kool-Aid in your water and you stir it up, just like we did with the stock pot. In this case, I'm gonna use tropical punch Kool-Aid. So what color do you think that will be? It will be very, very red. I'm gonna use two packs of tropical punch. And the reason I'm picking two is because I recently dyed some yarn with tropical punch and I saw that the color was very strong with just two. So, I'm not gonna use four packets, just two. I'm gonna stir it up before I put the yarn in it. If you were with us here, you would just smell your childhood. In this kind of cherry smell. I'm gonna take my yarn from the cord. Now, I'm gonna dunk it into our pitcher and make sure it's submerged. And then you put it out in the sun. I've done this on a hot Summer day and I've been able to dye the yarn in just a couple of hours. And I know it's dyed because this water that looks this very, very red color, becomes completely clear. If it's not a hot day, it's not really sunny, it'll take longer. And if it's a day where the sun goes behind the clouds and you feel like you want to be done, you can just take it into the house, pull the yarn out, pour the dye water into a stock pot, put your yarn back in, and simmer it on the stove to quicken it up. But if you are putting it outside, I recommend that you put some Saran Wrap or something on it so that it doesn't get bugs or anything in it.

Finishing

- So my yarn is dyed. My water is pretty much clear. With the lemonade color, it's slightly cloudy. Which I've found does happen with the lemonade colors. But for the most part it's clear. I've cooled it off enough to the point where I can handle it. And now I'm just gonna transfer it to a bowl of warm water. And this is just kind of a double check to make sure that there's not any more dye, because if there is dye in that, then it could sort of come off if you make something out of it. And then you wash it and then the dye will come off. But as long as it's clear, as long as your water stays clear then you're safe. And you can just dry it. So I think that looks good. Now we have our grape yarn. Our water is clear. I'm just going to pull it out. Obviously if you're working with kids you want to check that really carefully. Because you don't want any kids to feel like they're burning their hands. Just move this over. Gently put it into my, I guess you can call this rinse water. I feel pretty confident that the water is clear. So I'm just going to move these stock pots out of the sink. Because what I'm doing for a makeshift drying rack is I've just put a dowel over the sink. I'll just pull my yarn out. And just gently squeezing on it. I'm not twisting it, not ringing it. Just gently squeezing it. I think this was lemonade flavors, the pink lemonade and lemonade. Just hang it over here and leave it to dry. There's the grape. It's pretty purple. Hang it here. So all of that yarn is going to take a few hours to dry. And we don't have a few hours for this class. What I've done is I've brought in a sampling of some other yarns that I dyed. Remember, we started with undyed yarn. Here we did the Northampton bulky. What I did was, the company webs that makes this line of yarn, called Valley Yarns, they gave me a bunch of different yarns. And it's really interesting to dye yarns that are made of different fibers and that are spun in different ways because they do take the dye differently. So for example, this is called Valley Super Wash. It's a hundred percent extra fine Merino. And I made little labels here. And if you want to be, kind of keep track of what you're doing, then you can make labels for your yarn. Remember, you can't put these paper labels on until after your yarn is dry. You can't you know, try to dye your yarn with the label because your labels will fall apart. This is three pink lemonade and one lemonade. It's kind of neat. This is again the Valley Superwash. This is four lemonades. Lemonade is a pretty mild color. This is kind of as dark as it's gonna get. But, if we look here, this is also four lemonades. But this is a different yarn. And you see it's a little bit paler even though it's the exact same dye. And that just has to do with the type of fiber it is, and the way it's spun. This one's kind of interesting. It's what I think is a pretty brown color. But I actually over dyed the yarn. That means I dyed it once, I started out it was three peach mango. And it was an orange that I didn't like at all. So then I thought, "Oh, let me try to fix that." So then I went through the whole process again. I did two pink lemonade, and unfortunately then it was worse. So then I did what I needed to do. Just mix up so many colors that I would end up with brown. So I added grape for that. And grape as a great color to sort of just create a beautiful brown with if you just kind of mix it up. Here's the tropical punch color. This is the color we used when I showed you the sun dying method. So, as you can see, starting from this, and ending up with a palette like this, is really kind of magical. This isn't serious business, this is Kool-Aid. Have fun with it and then it's time to knit.