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Appalachian Ohio Fiber Guild

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April Topic: What is a Micron?

All of us love fiber, whether we raise it, spin it, knit it, felt it or crochet it. But, how many us understand how to determine the "softness" of a fiber? The most scientific way is to take a micron measurement of the fiber. Now, since a micron is 1/1000 of a millimeter, this is a task best left to a lab and a microscope. Fortunately for us, Susan put together a chart (see next page) from her research that outlines most of the fibers that we would use.

May Topic: Art in the Park

At our May meeting, it was decided to use that opportunity to put together some information boards for the Art in the Park event regarding the process that fiber goes through to become yarn. These boards will be used to educate the attendees of the festival that will be held in Gallipolis on July 4th. There will also be some pictures and information concerning the different animals that many members of the Guild raise on their respective farms. Contact Marlene Gruetter if you are interested in volunteering for a shift at our booth for the event.

Adventures in Fiber Bliss

This year for the first time, we are organizing and participating in our very own Fiber Retreat and it has been a fun experience. Sherry and Suzy have been working hard to prepare the menu, facilitate the field trip, wrestle up some door prizes, and come up with a fun project or two to work on for the weekend. The retreat will be held in Howard, Ohio on June 26-28 and we will be visiting a local shepherdess as well as a local weaving studio/ yarn shop. And don't forget your pattern for the "Got Your Goat Pattern Exchange"!

A Pictures Worth...

Say "Hello" to one of Marlene's new red kids from this spring!

Upcoming Events

- *June 26—28: Fiber Retreat*
- *July 4th: Art in the Park*
- *July 19th: Trip to Dairy Barn in Athens for Quilt Show.*
- *August 23rd: Guild Meeting*
- *September 13th: Guild Meeting*
- *September 19– 20: A Wool Gathering, Youngs Dairy*
- *October 4th: Guild Meeting*
- *November 15th: Guild Meeting*
- *December 20th: Guild Meeting*

Micron Count Study

Definitions:

Micron Count - Used predominantly in New Zealand and Australia and in the alpaca fiber industry world wide, is the measurement of one-millionth of a meter. The lower the micron count, the finer the wool.

Bradford Count - Old established numbering system is based on how many 560 yard skeins of yarn can be spun from one pound of yarn. The higher the number the finer the wool. With Merino coming in at 80's and Cotswold coming in at 36 to 46.

Animal fiber	Micron Count	Bradford Count	Staple Length - inches	Crimp	Elasticity	Descriptors	Other information
Sheep Breeds							
Blue-faced Leicester	28 - 24	56s - 60s	3 - 6	open	low	Delicate Crimp pattern	A treat to spin
Border Leicester	40 - 37	58s - 64s	4 - 5	open	low	Long, silky locks	Beautiful sheen and halo
California Red	31 - 28	50s - 54s	3 - 4	close	v good	Fine crimp	Coarse auburn hairs
Coopworth	39 - 35	44s - 48s	5 - 7	open	low	strong lustrous fiber	easy to spin, coarse
Cormo	23 - 21	58s - 64s	4 - 5	close	v good	silky locks	can be worn next to the skin
Corriedale	33 - 26	50s - 58s	3 - 5	med	good	fine fleece	long fine staple
Icelandic - outer coat	31 - 28	50s - 54s	4 - 10	v open	moderate	known as Lopi wool	
Icelandic - under coat	22 -19	64s - 70s	2 - 3	v open	moderate	separated fro outer coat	for fine lace spinning
Merino	24 - 18	60s - 70s	2 - 4	v close	v good	a fine crimped wool	perfect for fine spinning
Ramboulet	24 - 18	60s - 80s	2 - 4	v close	excellent	elastic nature	medium wool
Romney	35 - 40	48s - 54s	4 - 8	med	good	produces yarn with luster	
Suffolk	28 - 26	56s - 58s	2 - 3	o	excellent	springy wool	matte finish
Wensleydale	33 - 35	46s-56s	8 - 12	med - o	low		
Exotic Fibers							
Mohair (Angora Goat)						lacks natural elasticity	Alone can be heavy
First Shearing Kid	20*		3 - 6			"	"
Adult	45*		3 - 6			"	"
Alpaca	13 - 30 **					Staple length varies by animal	More like hair than fleece
Llama	20 - 30					Staple length varies by animal	More like hair than fleece
Angora Rabbits	10 - 12		3 - 5				

* - micron count increases with age.

** - micron count should be less then 22 to be considered luxury fiber

appropriate for next-to-skin wear.

Fiber is more like hair follicles than fiber

References: *A Fine Fleece, Knitting with Handspun Yarns*, by Lisa Lloyd

The Spinner's Companion, by Bobbie Irwin; various internet search sites.

Mozzarella cheese, part skim, easy

Back at our Holiday Meeting, Bev shared a fresh batch of mozzarella cheese with us that she had just made that morning, she is now sharing with us how to make it for ourselves!

You don't need a cheese press for this cheese. You can use whatever size stockpot you have. I like to fill my 7 1/2 quart stockpot as I can make a large cheese for the same amount of time it would take for a smaller one. When the cheese is finished and stretchy, it can be placed in a large mixing bowl or it can be cut into small pieces and rolled and stretched into string cheese. Children like to help make the string cheese.

7 1/2 gallon stockpot

Pot that 7 1/2 gallon pot fits in with something in the bottom to keep the milk pot off the bottom of the pot, put some water in bottom pot to level of supports.

6 cups combination yogurt of L. Bulgaricus and S. Thermophilus The combination yogurt of Bulgarian Yogurt or Y1 yogurt can be bought as a freeze dried powder from a cheese supply company. (or 4 T. buttermilk and 3 T. yogurt per gallon of milk)

1/8 tablet cheese color dissolve in 1/3 c water. It speeds the process up by using a spoon to crush the 1/8 color tablet in the water. Mix and have ready ahead of time to stir into the warm milk. The cheese color is optional, it is not necessary. I only use it because I have it. When it is used up, I won't use cheese color.

3/8 tsp. dried powdered rennet in about 1/3 cup water. Do not mix until needed.

Store raw milk in a cold place for several days so the cream will come to the top. Skim some of the cream off the milk. I usually get about 2 1/2 quarts of cream, more or less. Start heating the double boiler. Fill stock pot to within 1 1/4" of the top. adjust the level of the pot. Start to dissolve the color tablet. Stir and measure temperature of milk every 5 to 10 minutes or so. When it is 90 degrees, turn the burner off. Temperature should get to 96 to 100 degrees in a few minutes. Maintain a temperature of 96 to 100 degrees for the next half hour. Stir yogurt and buttermilk cultures until smooth and measure 2 cups at a time. Start counting a half hour when the first of the yogurt or buttermilk is added. I add some of the warm milk to the yogurt and stir it in or shake it in an empty jar. I usually shake milk in the empty yogurt containers to get all of it out. Stir the thinned yogurt and buttermilk into the warm milk. Stir gently for several more minutes. Add the dissolved color tablet, pouring it through a slotted spoon or spoon with holes while rotating the spoon over the surface of the milk to distribute it over a wider area of the milk. Stir for several minutes. Check the temperature and stir a minute or so every once in a while during the half hour after adding the cultures to help increase the acid more evenly. Then dissolve the required rennet for the amount of milk you are using. Add the rennet as described for the color tablet and stir gently for several minutes. Check the temperature while adding and stirring the rennet into the milk. Turn the heat on under the pot as necessary to maintain the correct temperature. Remove all utensils from the milk and let stand undisturbed until there is a layer of whey on top of the milk. It should take 45 minutes to 1 hour. Cut the curd into 1 inch columns and then cut through the columns several times. Start to heat and allow the curds and whey to rest for 15 minutes. Slowly bail the whey to the level of the curds, pouring it through a strainer into a bowl. Let rest 10 to 15 minutes and bail whey again, pouring curds back into the pot if necessary. The curds will start to form into a mat in the bottom of the pot. Get as much of the whey out as possible. Add salt to taste. 16 tsp per 7 1/2 gallons milk. Using a clean rubber glove on the hand that will work the cheese, start to fold the cheese from the bottom up, kind of like kneading bread, but use a more gentle touch. If it doesn't seem to want to go together, let rest some more and bail out more whey. At some point, turn the burner off when it is quite hot through the rubber glove. Fold up from the bottom of the pot and push down on the cheese. At some point, itwill start to have a shiny appearance and it will be mostly smooth and stretchy. You can put it all in a mixing bowl, cover and cool for several hours or wait until the next day to cut wrap and either eat or freeze for later use. While it is still warm, you can shape some of it into long pieces of string cheese 1/2 " to 1" in diameter. Cool on a cookie sheet then cut and wrap for storage.

The whey can be dumped down the drain, used to make lemonade, soup broth, liquid for bread, or ricotta cheese if the whey is less than 3 hours old. Put the whey into a pot and bring to about 200 degrees. You really don't have to measure the temperature. Just watch the whey and it will get foam on top (don't stir as if there are burned spots in the bottom of the pot they will then get into the ricotta) and almost immediately, you will see strings of ricotta forming. Remove from the burner and let set a minute or so. Use a strainer to dip the ricotta cheese off. Allow the ricotta to drain in a strainer or muslin in a colander. You can make the ricotta in several batches until the whey is used up. You can salt the ricotta and add cream as desired.