



A Family Thanksgiving Dinner

Dream Room #7

BY JOANN L. SWANSON

Wendy McKennon of Medford, Oregon, sharing memories of her family's Thanksgiving, inspired this Dream Room. She says, in part, "I come from a large family (I am the last of eight children). We had wonderful Thanksgiving and Christmas traditions. Our dining room table fit more than 10 people. [It was] set with all the traditional dishes—turkey, bowls of stuffing, mashed potatoes and gravy, peas...cranberry sauce...pies with dollops of whipped cream. Linen napkins with napkin rings...taper candles, salt and pepper shakers...sat on the table. I love realism, very intricate and detailed. Thanks for letting me share my memories! I hope you can picture it! I have been dreaming about this miniature room box for many years!"

Well Wendy, although it would be impossible for me to re-create all that you have told me about, I have put some of your memories to work in a fairly traditional Thanksgiving, pre-dinner scene. I hope that it may inspire you to bring your own room-box dream to reality. How can it not? Your heartwarming descriptions make it almost a must. As an aside, this also applies to so many of you that entered the contest and shared wonderful memories with me—just do it! I know projects of this type can sometimes seem overwhelming, but start with something small and savor the memories as you work. It will be so worthwhile!

I am sure that we all have memories of our own special holiday family dinners and bringing them to life in a miniature setting is a wonderful way to help preserve and share them. You may re-create what I have given you, adding personal touches, or pick and choose from my ideas for your own settings. Or have some fun and make the scene, post-dinner with dirty plates, half-empty bowls, carved turkey, pies cut, napkins unfolded and placed here and there, and maybe a family dog under the table looking for scraps. This could also be done similar to my before-and-after, two-sided, Christmas Dream room box from July 2007. What fun!

To Wendy and all, may your Thanksgiving be filled with the love that creates those memories.

Joann



The year has turned its circle,
The seasons come and go.
The harvest all is gathered in
And chilly north winds blow.
Orchards have shared their treasures,
The fields their yellow grain,
So open wide the doorway—
Thanksgiving comes again!
—Anonymous

THE BOX

Except where specifically listed, tools and materials used in this project are in bold type.

The box housing the scene is simply formed from **four 8" x 10" standard wooden picture frames**. Remove all paper and glass from the frames. Glue them together, short sides to short sides, so that the frames that will be the front and back of the box are inset on the ones that form the sides of the box. Keep all corners squared. Usually when I use frames this size I make the 10" the height of the box, but here it will be 8", a little shorter than normally used for miniature rooms but with this scene it works well.

Cut a piece of **1/2"-thick foam core** to fit snugly in the bottom of the box, but don't glue it in yet. Cover the floor as desired with **hardwood**, carpet, or tile. I chose hardwood floors and used pre-finished wood strips salvaged from a discarded wooden Venetian blind. Cut them to size and glue them onto the foam-core floor using **Crafter's Pick Ultimate Glue** and press flat until the glue sets. Sand the floor smooth and finish it with **Future floor wax**. Glue the completed floor into the box, bottom edge flush with the bottom edges of the frame. **Glue-stick** a piece of **brown art paper** to the entire bottom of the box for a finished look.

The back of the box will be the only non-transparent wall. Of course, you may choose to close in one or two of the side walls, too. Build the back wall in layers; the first is the **glass that was removed from the frame**, and the second is what you want to view from the outside of the box. This could be, as seen, a **collage of vintage Thanksgiving cards** (enlarge images from the cutout pages to sizes desired and print on **card stock**; cut out and glue-stick to a backing of **art or scrapbook paper**). The rest of the layers can be **scrap cardboard** or what have you, cut to size and layered until the total thickness of the wall is flush with the frame it in which it's inset. Glue in place and press flat until the glue sets.

Choose a piece of **wallpaper or scrapbooking paper** to cover the back wall. This should be in a subtle pattern so as not to overwhelm the small details of the room. Cut it the size of the frame opening you are covering, plus an extra **3/16"** in height and **3/8"** in width. Glue-stick the paper to the back wall, bottom edges flush and centered side to side.

For molding, cut **two 3/8"-wide and two 3/16"-wide strips of railroad/poster board** the length of the paper on the back wall. Run a smooth dowel over one long edge of each strip with pressure to flatten and round off these edges. Glue a narrow strip on top of a wider strip, bottom edges (those not rounded off) flush. When the glue has set, paint these



moldings to match the room or its furnishings. Glue one molding strip along the bottom edge of the wallpaper, double edge to the floor, and the second molding strip along the top edge of the wallpaper, with its double edge of molding facing the top of the box.

Cut four pieces of **1/4"-square strip-wood**; miter-cut the ends, picture-frame style. Paint, stain, or paint *and* stain to match the frame color as closely as possible. Glue one each into the corners of the frame, set down 1/8" from the top of the frame. These strips will hold the top glass in place.

Have a piece of **glass** cut to fit the top of the box and have its edges sanded smooth. The glass will not be glued in place, so that it can be removed for easy access to the interior of the box. The other three pieces of glass that were removed from the frames can be glued in place inside the box anytime in your interior decorating that is convenient for you. If you'd like, glue wood strips over the glass edges from the inside of the box. Small wooden turnings or beads may be glued or nailed to the bottom of the box at each corner as legs to add interest to the box (I used chesspieces here).

DINING TABLE AND CHAIRS

TOOLS AND MATERIALS:

- Inexpensive, in-scale, finished wooden table and chairs (the table and chairs used here are readily available online and at many miniature shops)
- Round cotton facial cleansing pads
- Fine (approximately 200-thread-count) cotton fabric in color of choice
- White railroad or poster board
- Crafter's Pick Ultimate Glue
- Optional: buttonhole thread to match or coordinate with fabric
- Acrylic paint in choice of color (buttermilk used here)
- Dremel Moto Tool fitted with a fine-grit sander

STEP 1: Remove any seat cushions and their residue from the chairs.

STEP 2: Trace the front of the chair's back from its top to the top of the seat, and the rear of the chair's back from the top to the bottom of the seat, onto railroad or poster board. If your chair's back has irregular sides, such as the one I used, make the sides straight on the pattern. Cut out patterns. Clip or clamp



the front piece in place on the chair and trim the pattern as necessary for an exact fit; if needed, use the Dremel to sand away the irregular sides of the chair to fit the trimmed pattern.

STEP 3: Paint the legs, seat edge, bottom, and edges of the seat with acrylic. It will take several light coats for good coverage. Let one coat dry before adding the next, and let the final coat dry for at least several hours.

STEP 4: Cover the face of the front pattern with cotton facial pads, stretching the pad to fit as needed and trimming off any excess to fit the pattern. Cut a piece of the cotton fabric sized to fit the pattern with enough excess all around to fit over the edges of the chair back and to turn to the rear of the chair back. Lay the pattern, padded side down, centered on the wrong side of the fabric and turn the bottom edge of the fabric (approximately 1/4") to the back of the pattern and secure them in place with glue. Apply some glue to the face of the chair back and place the prepared padded piece evenly on the front of the chair back. Glue fabric edges to the rear of the chair back, clipping and trimming fabric as needed for a smooth finish. Let the glue set.

STEP 5: If you want to tuft the front of the padded seat, lightly mark the tufting spots on the fabric and poke needle holes through them and into the railroad-board backing. Thread a large needle with buttonhole/upholstery thread and sew through the poked holes from the back, catching a few fabric threads and then passing the needle back through the hole. Tie the two ends of the thread in a knot to hold the tuft in place.

STEP 6: Trace and cut a railroad/poster board seat pattern; pad the seat top with the cotton pads. Cover the seat with fabric, making neat corners and turning raw edges to the back of the pattern; secure them with glue. Glue the seat in place. Cut a strip of fabric long enough to fit around the seat, and wide enough so that when it is folded into thirds it will be wide enough to cover the wood edges of the seat.

Fold the strip into thirds and glue it together, using glue sparingly. Glue the prepared strip around the chair seat, starting and stopping in the center back and slightly melding the top edge of this strip with the chair pad.

STEP 7: Cover the chair's rear back pattern neatly with fabric, securing with glue on the back side only, clipping and trimming fabric as needed for a smooth finish. Glue it in place over the rear of the seat back, melding edges as much as possible. You may trim this seam and the seat edge/seat pad seam with fine cording or thread, in color to match or complement the upholstery color.

STEP 8: For instructions for making the master chair with arms, look to my article "Transformations," *Dollhouse Miniatures*, January 2006. The chair is upholstered before the arms are added.

STEP 9: Paint the table to match the chairs. The size of the tabletop may be enlarged with mat board, as was done here, much as a plywood sheet is often used in real life for extra or more-comfortable seating.

SIDEBOARD

This piece started life as an inexpensive office desk. I filled in the leg space with mat board, took out the side drawers and replaced them with mat board doors (one shown open), added legs and hardware removed from a dresser from the same furniture collection, added a backboard cut from a tabletop, and fitted it with a piece of acrylic mirror. The whole is painted to match the rest of chairs and table. The large center drawer is lined with green "felt" and filled with silverware.

DESSERT STAND

All pieces except shelves are cut from $\frac{3}{32}$ "-square strip-wood. You may cut the top bar (handle) from a turned dowel if desired. Cut two sides 3" long, four crossbars, and two feet each 1" long. Cut three shelves from **mat board** and three from **card stock**. Cut the center out of the card-stock shelf pieces and glue them centered over their

mat-board counterparts. Glue the shelves centered on top of the three crossbars. Glue shelf/crossbar pieces and the top crosspiece between the sides. Let glue set. Glue the feet centered on bottom of sides. Paint, or paint and stain, as desired. *Note: Shelves and crosspieces may be enlarged to accommodate larger-size desserts. If you do so, enlarge the feet the same amount.*

• ACCESSORIES •

TABLECLOTH AND NAPKINS

Adjust the size of the tablecloth to fit your table, adding the overhang desired (see cutout pages). Print the tablecloth and napkins on printer fabric following the package's and your printer's instructions, using **240-thread-count fabric from EQ Printables premium cotton lawn inkjet fabric sheets**. Cut out the tablecloth, leaving enough fabric to turn back a hem secured with glue (or sewn if desired).

PLATES

Print plates (see cutout pages) on **card-stock-weight printer paper** following printer directions and setting your computer to its best-quality printing. Cut them out and lay them on a slightly resilient surface. Trace over the inner circle of the plates with a **medium ball stylus**. Start with very slight pressure and increase it slowly as you go around and around. This will cause the plate edges to turn up slightly without creasing. Cover both sides of the plates with several coats of **clear nail enamel**, drying well between coats, to gloss and give depth to the plates.

GLASSES AND SILVERWARE

These are **Chrysnbon** purchases.

SIDEBOARD RUNNER

Print onto 240-thread-count printer fabric. Cut out, leaving enough fabric around the edges to make a hem secured with glue. You may add tassels made from thread to the ends.

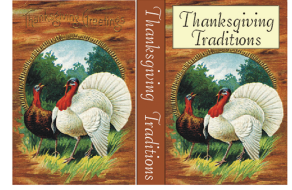
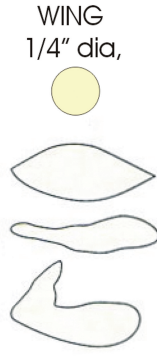
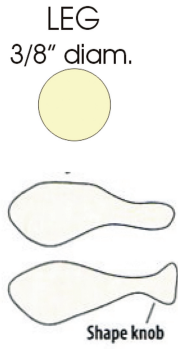
CANDLEHOLDERS

On the sideboard are **plastic beads resembling pumpkins**. I glued two **green art-paper punched leaves** along their sides and glued a **small silver grommet** over the top hole. Cut a $\frac{3}{32}$ "-diameter dowel to the length of candle you desire plus the height of the bead base. Whittle away the top $\frac{1}{16}$ " of the dowel to form a wick. Dip the tip of the wick in yellow paint. When dry, coat the painted wick with clear nail enamel. Paint the candle a **rust or amber color**. When the enamel has dried, rub all over the candles' surfaces with **candle wax**. Smooth the wax surfaces with warm fingertips and then glue the candles into their pumpkin bases.

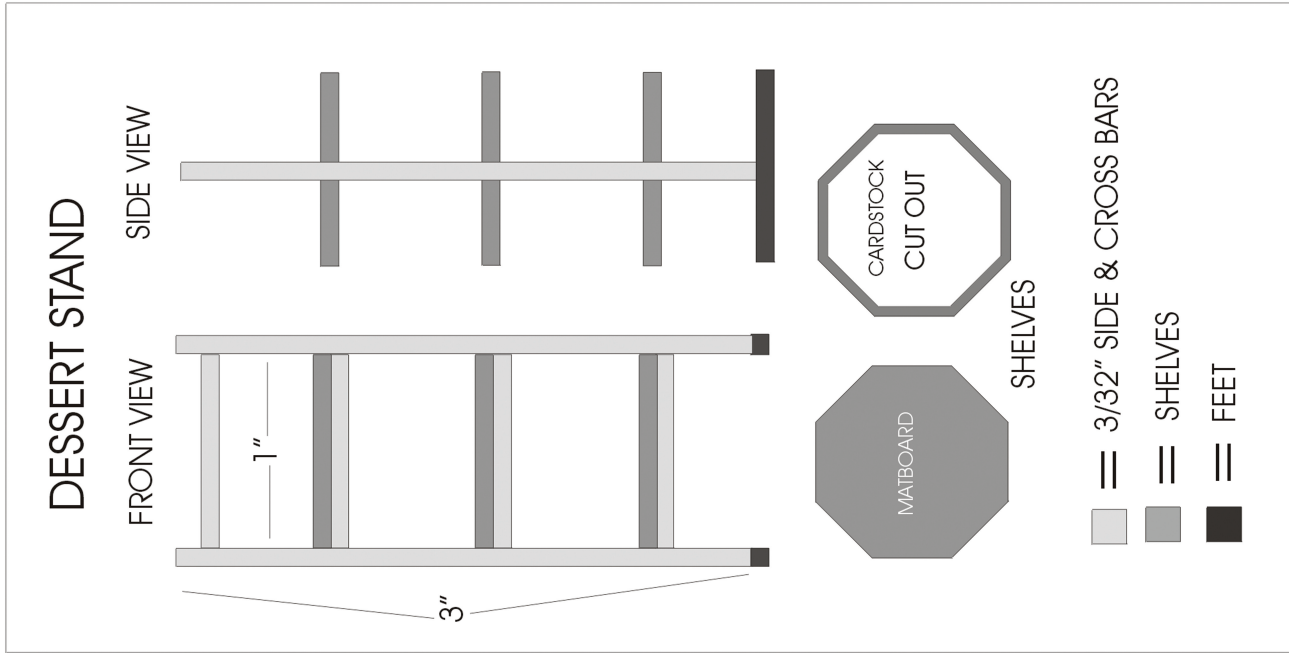




TURKEY



BOOK



ABOVE THIS LINE, PHOTOCOPY AT 100%

VINTAGE CARDS FOR COLLAGE

BELOW THIS LINE, PHOTOCOPY AT 200%



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WALL ART



SALT AND PEPPER SHAKERS

These are simply **silver-colored plastic sprue with a dome shape** left over from various Chrysnbon kits. I cut them free and wrote S and P on them with a **fine-tipped permanent marker pen**. You may choose to have a set for each diner, or a set on each side of the table.

FLORAL CENTERPIECE

TOOLS AND MATERIALS:

- Small, sharp scissors (a must)
- Crepe paper or art tissue in yellow and rust/bronze
- Green cloth-covered wire
- Green floral tape
- Crafter's Pick Ultimate glue
- Snippets of fine dried flowers in rust and natural
- Dark green floral tape
- Acrylic paint in coral and leaf green
- Shallow oval container (in this case I cut the bottom from a rigid 1-3/16" x 3/4" oval clear plastic container and painted the inside a rust color, which makes the outside resemble ceramic).

STEP 1: Container: Prepare your container by gluing in a piece of Styrofoam to fit and painting it brown or green.

STEP 2: Leaves: Referring to the Croton leaf diagram and pattern (see cutout pages): Cut a 1" length of cloth-covered wire. Stretch out a 1-1/4" length of floral tape and lay 5/8" of the wire on the tape, centered side to side. Add a touch of glue along the wire on the tape, and then fold the tape width-wise back over the wire, sandwiched as shown in the diagram. You'll need to make six or more leaves in this way.

STEP 3: Cut the leaves to shape as in the diagram. Using a coral-color acrylic and fine-tipped brush, paint both sides of the leaves as shown. When the leaves are dry, lay them leaf on a flat surface and use tweezers to pinch in some irregular "pleats" along the leaves' edges. Coat the finished leaves with clear nail enamel.

STEP 4: Bending the protruding wire as needed, poke the leaves into the container so that they lie almost flat to the table. If you are using this as the table centerpiece, try it on now for fit and space and make any adjustments to leaf placement and extension.



STEP 5: Exhibition mums: For each one of these (you'll want five) cut two 3"-long x 1/2"-wide strips of art tissue or crepe paper (if using crepe paper, stretch it out first), one each in yellow and rust. Place a rust strip over a yellow one, and fold them in half to a 1/4" width. Fold the ends of the double strip evenly into its center, and then again, creating fourths side to side. Measure and lightly mark a line 5/32" in from the folded edge. Use scissors to finely fringe the 5/32" section, from fold to line. Carefully unfold, separate, and open the strips. Gently refold along the fringed fold line in the opposite direction to the first fold, this time with the yellow on top, and being careful not to crease the fold line this time. Secure lightly with glue along non-fold edges. Cut a length of wire, dip its tip in glue, and lay it on the non-fringed section of a fringed strip. Wrap the strip around the wire as smoothly, tightly, and evenly as possible, using glue to secure it, making sure the glue does not get on fringed section. Use a *light* touch with the glue. Pinch and roll the non-fringed section tightly to taper it as much as possible. Paint this sec-



tion green and let dry. Use a needle tool or something similar to gently pull layers of fringe down toward the wire until a fluffy ball-like shape is formed. Glue the blossoms into the container: one in the center set at the desired overall height of the arrangement; two on each long end, sitting out and over the Croton leaves; one on each of the shorter sides, over the leaves there; and one each between the top mum and the mums on the long sides of the container, at a medium height.

STEP 6: Small garden mums: For each of these (make 8 or so), cut a 2-1/2" x 3" strip of rust/bronze paper, 1/8" wide. Measure and mark a line dividing the strip in half lengthwise. Fold into fourths widthwise, and fringe along one edge to a line marked as above. Unfold and proceed as directed for exhibition mum as to attaching to wire, etc. Pull petals down, leaving a center clump of petals. Place these mums in and among the other mums in the arrangement.

STEP 7: Filling in your arrangement: You may use tiny sprigs of dried flowers. Lightly spray the whole with a **matte fixative** to help preserve colors.

STEP 8: (optional) You may insert candles in the arrangement for interest. Shape them from round toothpicks cut to the desired length. Sand the very tips to resemble wicks. Paint them in the color desired; when the paint has set, rub candles with candle wax, transfer it to the toothpicks, and smooth the transferred wax with warm fingertips.

BOOK

Make a copy of the book cover (cutout pages) on card stock or photo paper. Cut out, score, and fold. For pages, separate a section of a note pad, such as Post-Its, that is the thickness of the book. Cut a section of this a scant smaller than the book cover, then glue section of the pad against the spine of the book cover. Clip or clamp the book while it dries.

DINNER

The food for this project was created from homemade, "cold-porcelain" clay. It is simple and inexpensive to make, and very easy to work with. I have used it, off and on, for many years and it holds up very well. Of course, purchased clays such as Fimo may also be used, adjusting the instructions as needed and following package directions for curing.

COLD-PORCELAIN STYLE CLAY

Mix together 1 cup **baking soda**, 1/2 cup **cornstarch**, and 2/3 cup water in a **small saucepan**. Cook over medium heat, stirring constantly until the mixture holds together and somewhat resembles mashed potatoes. Remove the mixture from the pan and place on a breadboard or other suitable kneading surface. When it is cool enough to handle, knead in 3 tablespoons of **white, tacky type glue**, 1 teaspoon **white acrylic paint**, either several drops of **bleach or oil of clove** (as a preservative), and then

another 1/2 cup of cornstarch. Knead until smooth; Store in an airtight bag. Clay will air-dry hard in several hours to overnight, depending on the thickness of the piece. Clay may be tinted by kneading in **colored chalk shavings or acrylic or watercolor paints**. Sculpted pieces may also be painted after their creation.

TOOLS AND MATERIALS:

- Acrylic paint in yellow, tan, medium brown, dark orange, green, clear gloss (clear nail enamel may be used instead), and semi-gloss
- Snippets of dried greenery
- Sharp safety-razor blade
- Crafter's Pick Ultimate Glue
- Mixing bowls of assorted sizes
- Serving spoons of assorted sizes (Chrysnbon soup spoons will work in most cases)
- Red chalk or pastels
- Transparent amber dye (Tap Plastics carries Chemco brand (www.tapplastics.com or 800-246-5055))
- Tiny no-hole beads in green and red
- Cranberry-red nail enamel

ROASTED TURKEY

STEP 1: Tint your clay to a tan or ochre color with scrapings from chalk or pastels. Roll a ball approximately 3/4" in diameter for body, two balls approximately 3/8" for legs, and two balls approximately 1/4" in diameter for wings.

STEP 2: Shape body into an egg-like form with your fingers so it is slightly higher in the middle, slightly tapered on the ends and fairly flat on the bottom. Shape legs by rolling balls between your fingers and thumb into cones approximately 3/4" long. Press slightly on one long side to flatten. Using a round toothpick, indent around the narrow end of each leg, 1/16" up from the end, to model a small knob shape. Using a paintbrush, lightly dampen leg areas on body and lightly press legs to body, being careful not to distort them. Shape wing balls into long, thin triangles. Slightly pinch and model one side of the triangle to a narrower shape. Attach wings next to legs on the body, bending to the shape shown in the photos. Refine the turkey's overall shape as desired. Let dry.

STEP 3: Make small piles of chalk or pastel scrapings in ochre, dark/burnt orange, medium brown, and dark brown. Starting with ochre, apply an overall coat to the body with a brush or cotton swab, either dry or dampened. Next apply orange and then medium brown with a slightly damp brush.



Use a dry-brush method and small stiff brush, to stipple dark brown all over the body, more on the top than the sides. Let chalks set. Use amber-tinted nail enamel to glaze the turkey. Looking at a photo of a roasted turkey will aid you in your painting. Let dry and glue to a 1:12-scale platter. Cut very small snippets of dried greenery and glue them to the platter around the turkey. Greens may be accented with “cranberries,” “crabapples,” or the like made from clay or beads.

DRESSING/STUFFING

Tint a piece of clay yellow, another tan, and a third medium brown. Pat each out flat on a piece of glass and let it dry a bit. Use a razor blade to finely mince each pat, and then lightly toss all three colors together. Let the mixture dry. Sprinkle dressing with very fine snippets of dried greenery. Make a 2/3 Ultimate glue-1/3 water mixture and toss it lightly with dressing until everything holds together. Mound in a bowl, add a spoon, and let the assembly set.

MASHED POTATOES

Mound clay in a serving bowl, without packing it down; add a serving spoon. When the clay is dry, coat the potatoes with clear, semi-gloss acrylic. Form a tiny butter pat of clay and place it on top of the potatoes. When it is dry, paint it butter-yellow, letting the yellow paint run a bit out on to the potatoes to simulate melted butter. Coat the butter with acrylic gloss. Fine shavings of red chalk can be used for a sprinkling of paprika if that’s how your mom served them.

GRAVY

Fill a small bowl or gravy boat smoothly with clay. Let the clay dry. (If you are adding a gravy ladle, remember to do so before the clay dries.) Paint the top with an appropriate gravy color to your taste or tradition. When dry, coat the gravy with acrylic gloss.

CANDIED SWEET POTATOES

Tint your clay dark orange to your taste. Roll it into balls approximately the size of green peas; roll the balls into ovals and let them dry slightly. Cut the ovals into five wedge-shaped pieces using a very sharp safety-razor blade. Pile the wedges into a bowl and let dry. Add tiny drops of transparent amber dye to clear nail enamel following dye safety instructions. *Note: I use these dyes, especially the amber, yellow, and red, to tint bottles of nail enamel to use for many foods where just a coating is needed.* When the dye is dry, paint over the sweet potatoes for a brown-sugar glaze.

PEAS

Pour tiny no-hole beads into a small disposable container such as a bottlecap. Drop in bright pea-green-color acrylic until all beads are coated. Pile

in a serving bowl, adding a spoon if desired. Let the paint dry; it should hold the peas to the bowl but, if not, drop in some watered-down glue. When the paint has set, coat your peas with clear gloss. You may add a butter pat as described for mashed potatoes.

CRANBERRY SAUCE

Pour red glass no-hole beads into a small disposable container. Drop in cranberry-red nail enamel and stir to coat the beads. Fill two clear bowls and top with drops of the red nail enamel to get a sauce look. Let dry. *Note: The two bowls seen on the table are made from the stem pulled from Chryson-bon clear wineglasses glued into a hole poked into the bottom of clear, concave closure segments cut from the corners of a plastic container that once held tomatoes from Costco.*

ROLLS

Punch out 3/16”-diameter disks from a sheet of white fun foam. Use scraping from colored chalk or pastels to add baked-look colors to their tops. I cut the handles from small, square, woven baskets to hold the rolls. Cut a square of cotton fabric (good use for left-over scraps of printer fabric) and fringe out their sides. Glue the fabric into baskets as shown and fill the baskets with rolls. 🍞



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