Handbuilt Plates

1. Roll out a slab of clay ¼" - ⅜" of an inch thick. I tend to make my plates round, and use a “donut” template that gives me the plate cut line along with foot ring line for consistent dimensions. Cut along the exterior of the template, and mark the foot ring using a pin tool.

2. After cutting your circular slab, center it on a banding wheel. Use the previously marked foot line as a guide to score and then add your foot ring. I use a hand extruder to extrude my feet for added uniformity. Put a bevel on the inside of the foot ring where the foot and the plate meet – this will help the plate top to curve better in step 4.

3. Let your plate and foot ring set up until the clay is a firm, yet still flexible, leatherhard. If you flip too early, you may misshape your foot ring and if you wait too long, the plate top will crack when you attempt to shape.

4. Put the plate back on the banding wheel, this time foot side down. You now have a flat disc of clay with a foot – not very aesthetically pleasing! Using your right hand, press down on the center of the plate and with your left hand push up on the rim. Rotate the plate as you do this, continuing to push down on the interior and up on the exterior until you have a plate curve you are happy with. I like to prop a mirror at my workstation for this stage so I can get a really good sense of the plate edge.

5. Use a sureform to trim down the edge of the plate so it is nice and round (or any shape you like!)

6. Extrude or roll out a coil and attach to the rim of your plate. When scoring the rim, be sure to score parallel to the edge of the plate. If you make vertical score lines, it’s much harder to disguise them later.

7. After attaching the rim, use a stiff, flat brush to clean up the seams. Once the rim has set up to a firm leatherhard, you’ll be able to do final seam adjustments on the top and bottom of the plate.

8. I let my plates set up under plastic overnight for the rim and the plate to equalize in moisture content. The following day, I clean up the seams and latex areas of clay I want to terra sig so they remain clean during slip decoration. Let the latex set up overnight on the leatherhard clay before decorating.