

Bottle Cap Blossoms

Julie Picarello ~ 2021

Bottle Cap Prep:

- 1) Scrape cork from bottle cap if needed and clean with alcohol; add “teeth” by sanding the interior (optional).
- 2) Roll scrap clay out on medium thin setting and cut a disc slightly smaller than the bottle cap interior; bake and cool.
- 3) Unwrap the JB Weld putty and use an old blade or knife to cut off approximately 1/4". There will be two colors visible, pink in the center surrounded by gray. Fold and knead the putty until the two colors blended into one.
- 4) Press the blended putty into the bottle cap, making sure it completely covers the bottom and touches the edges.
- 5) Press the cured polymer disc onto the putty, pushing firmly to ensure it is secure and the rim is slightly encased in putty. Set aside to let the putty cure per manufacturer’s instructions. NOTE: this is sticky stuff...use alcohol to clean your fingers and blade before it dries ☺
- 6) When cured, use [metal patina paint](#) to accent the rim of the bottle cap if desired. I like to use small [micro brush applicators](#) to apply the paint, 2.0mm is a good size. Select a color that either compliments or contrasts with the bottle cap and/or petal colors.



Screen Printing the Petals:

- 1) Select one or more alcohol ink and acrylic paint colors based on the bottle cap palette.
- 2) Add a drop or two of alcohol ink to conditioned translucent clay; let the alcohol evaporate and then fold the clay in half and run thru the PM. Continue to tint the clay to a desired saturation level, then roll out on the thickest PM setting and set aside. The amount of clay you use will depend on whether you want to make all petals the same, or mix them up. Start with no more than 1/4 of a 2 oz. brick.
- 3) Select a silkscreen with a tight repeatable pattern, and place it shiny side down on the tinted clay. Squeeze a small amount of paint on a squeegee or plastic card and smoothly draw over the screen. When finished, immediately place the screen in a tub of water and gently agitate to ensure the paint does not dry and clog the screen.
- 4) Roll a sheet of translucent on the thinnest setting of the pasta machine, and place it on paper. Place another piece on top and brayer it so that it is flat. Remove the top piece of paper and gently set the silk screened clay face down on it. Flip it over and brayer to remove any air bubbles. NOTE: Silkscreen the back of the sheet to have patterns on both sides.
- 5) Repeat steps 1-4 if multiple petal colors/designs are desired.

Forming the Petals and Anchor:

1) Place plastic wrap over the silkscreened sheet(s). Use 1/2" and 1/4" circle cutters to punch out donuts. Smooth the edges of the donuts and slightly elongate by pulling on two ends concurrently; this will result in a more oval shape petal.

NOTE#1: I typically use 7-8 petals for the blossom; any extras can be used for earrings or as links in a polymer chain.

NOTE#2: Rather than donuts, alternate shapes could also be formed.



2) Collage silkscreened scraps together and run thru the PM on a medium-thin setting. Punch out a circle the same size as the bottle cap or slightly smaller, do not make it bigger. This will become the anchoring circle of the blossom.

3) Flip the anchoring circle pattern-side down and gently arrange the petals so that they overlap into the circle by about 1/8", spaced consistently apart. If you plan to

add a wire bail, make sure that you have left space in at least one location for the wire to fit between the petals. Once you are satisfied with the placement, place a piece of paper over the blossom and gently press the tip of each petal into the anchoring circle. Once the petals are secured, bake and cool.



Attaching Bail and Bottle Cap:

1) Once the blossom anchor has cooled, carefully sand and polish it. Be extremely careful to support the blossom in your hand as you work, as the connection points are still vulnerable. But this needs to be done before the bottle cap is attached to ensure a consistent finish.



2) If adding a wire bail, create the loop and set the wire so that the tail extends into the center, with a bend at the very end to lock into the clay.

3) Fill the pocket of the blossom with raw clay, ensuring that the wire bail is completely enclosed. While it is not necessary, a drop of liquid clay could be used between cured and raw clay to help guarantee connectivity.

4) Fill the pocket of the bottle cap with raw clay, again using a drop of liquid clay if desired. The goal is to be able to set the bottle cap flush on top of the petals with no gap, but with enough clay between them so they strongly adhere.

5) Put the piece back in the oven for the final cure, re-polishing once it is cool.

Magnets:

My pieces were originally made for an artist swap where each piece would be part of an overall bouquet, so my pieces had copper tubing as flower stems. But you could make these into magnets as well as jewelry. In the anchor circle, just cut out a hole where the magnet would sit before baking. Then when filling the pocket with raw clay, set the magnet in place before the final bake. Be sure to use the high temp magnets that can withstand 300F. [Victoria James](#) recommends [K&J Magnetics](#), and says “I find that you want about 2.5lb to 3.5lb for most applications. Magnets can be stacked and pull force is additive. Meaning if you stack two magnets with a pull force of 1.5lb, you will get a pull force of 3lb. I mention this because, if you are unsure of what pull force you need, you can buy the lesser force and just stack them”.

Silkscreens:

My favorite silkscreens are by [Moiko](#) – great designs and even better customer service. However, you may want to consider making your own! Not only is it a blast to develop your own designs, but it means that your work is even more unique. One note...when I made my first screens over 10 years ago, I used material from EZScreenPrint, and at the time they only offered a standard mesh product. They have since added a [HiDef product](#) which is intended for artwork with finer details, and is ideal for polymer.

Tinted Epoxy:

I love to use 2-part epoxy that I have tinted with acrylic paint, inks or powdered pigments because it can function as both an adhesive and as a design element. To tint, squeeze out equal parts resin and hardener on an index card or coated paint chip. Add minute amounts of coloring medium to either the resin or the hardener – do not begin to mix them together until the desired tint is reached.

In the example below, the connector wire of one side of a resistor device was cut flush to the resistor. The wire on the other side was anchored in raw clay to hold the resistors in place so that the tinted epoxy could be carefully applied to the cut end. Once fully set, the resistors make fun jewelry accents.



