

Autumn Inspirations

Home Decor
Hearty Recipes
Fall Crafting
Back-to-School
Holiday Entertaining

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Home Décor



Come on in to my Fall Home Tour! ~ by Denise Murtha

Today I will Feature the Interior...later this week the Front Porch.

I know you have heard this a million times over the past month, but for those of you who are reading for the first time, this was my first Fall to Decorate. And boy did I have a good time.

I replaced the Family Photo with a Fabulous Fall Wreath.



Added some Fall Foliage, Pumpkins and this Hay Ride Sign that I found at a Hobby Lobby.



The Hearth needed some sprucing up hence the Twig Fruit and Pumpkin.



I replaced the candles with Pumpkins and added a Lantern (which I might actually keep there after the holidays).



Fruit and Berries were sprinkled throughout.



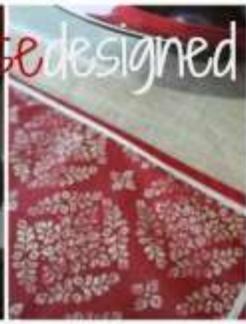
As were Pumpkins of all sorts. Whether real, synthetic, made of twigs, big or small, I scattered them around anywhere I could find a spot.



I incorporated a New Element to my design that I had never used before...**Burlap**.

I even created the **Burlap Table Runner** myself along with a **Tutorial** for you to make your own.

And I also created a **Wall** and **Table Design** that I Featured in earlier posts. Click on the pictures for the Tutorials.





I really went all out for this First Design. I cannot wait to see what I can do next year.

Fall Front Porch ~ by Denise Murtha



I have been wanting to showcase my Fall Front Porch now for awhile. However, my poor door was not ready.

Yes...you heard me...my Door was not Ready!

No! My door didn't actually speak to me, but if you could have seen it before the transformation?!?! **It was in such! sad! shape!**

But its done now! Yay!!!

So here goes...

Drum roll please....



My favorite is the Fall Wreath!



The Barrels of Hay were bought from the local craft store so they are synthetic and not actual hay. I wanted to avoid the real stuff because they tend to attract bugs and start to mildew.



And of course, I love the pumpkins...the decorated ones. Emma and I did them ourselves. You can read [Blinged out Pumpkins](#) for more info. So much fun!



As you can see, though, I did sprinkle in some real, authentic pumpkins and gourds. Couldn't do without those.

Who can forget the mums?!?!?! A true representation that Fall is here.



Then I just added a couple of additional accent pieces and...



It was Done!!

Hope you love it as much as I do!

A Fall Porch Display ~ by Cori Warner



Fall is falling!

The cooler weather we've been having recently inspired me to finish up the **front yard project**, and clean up my front porch.

The **old fencing shelves** by my front door, however, were still pretty pitiful. The only thing on them was two clay pots full of dirt from last year's plants. Sad looking, indeed.

I decided to go through my stashes and see what I could find to pretty up my shelves.

I pulled out a great crackled **urn** in a pale green.



I found this chicken wire cloche, a silk Sago Palm, and green table runner. Aaaand that was about it.



Time to go Shopping! Luckily, it's Fall clearance time all over town, cuz stores are making room for all the holiday stuff. So I ran up to Two Hip Chicks, the marketplace where my shop is, to see what folks had on sale. Bingo!



I've been watching this crown for a while. And I love the moss-covered rocks, instead of flowers in this urn! The little bird adds just the right touch of Fall color.



I picked up some Fall greenery for my urn, cotton bolls (love them!) and this cute pot with a bird on it. I added a small bird's nest inside the cage. (Are you starting to see a trend here?)



Finally, I found a pretty twig and yet another **Bird** for the last shelf.

I'm thinking I may have to shuffle some things around for a day or two, until I'm happy with the arrangement. It's so nice to have this spot of Fall-inspired lovelies on my porch!



Hearty Fall Recipes

Slow Cooker Barbecue Sliders ~ by Alli Smith

My husband loves to use his outdoor smoker to make barbecue, but when the weather's messy outside or when he's not going to be home all day to tend to the smoker, I call on my slow cooker barbecue sliders for a great meal.

My Slow Cooker Barbecue Sliders are one of my family's favorite sandwiches of all time. My oldest grandson is always asking me to make them for him. Since they are so simple to make, how can I possibly say no?

Helpful Hint: Make sure you use the Hawaiian Rolls when making these sliders. The rolls just put them over the top and into a whole new world. (Now I'm humming the theme song from *Aladdin* – A Whole New World – because you know I have a **song for that!**)



Ingredients

- 1 Boston Butt (8-10 lbs.)
- 1 12 oz. cola
- Liquid Smoke (optional)
- Kraft Honey Barbecue Sauce (OR your favorite sauce)

- Sweet Baby Ray's Honey Barbecue Sauce (Optional)
- Hawaiian Bread Rolls

Instructions

1. Rinse the pork butt – this is debatable, but I say rinse that nasty thing off! Then I pour a little white vinegar over this (very optional) because (in my mind) it takes away that "porky" taste. So, do or don't do. It's probably just me. Place the butt in a slow cooker. I use a big oval one and it works perfectly for this. Pour in the cola and splash a few shakes of liquid smoke over the butt. Add a few shakes of salt and a few more of pepper. Cover and cook on high for 5–6 hours or low 8–9 hours.
2. Remove from slow cooker and shred (with two forks) into a large bowl, removing fat as you come across it. Once it is all shredded, mix equally parts of the two barbecue sauces and add to the meat until it suits your taste. Serve on Hawaiian bread rolls with pickles and extra sauce on the side.

Note: The reason I mix the two sauces is because of my husband. Sometimes, he makes his own barbecue sauce but when he doesn't have the time, we use store bought. One day he wanted to try the Sweet Baby Ray's and we couldn't figure out which we preferred so we mixed them together and it was divine! Use whatever barbecue sauce suits you, but do try our combination at least once.

Chicken Tortilla Soup: Awesomeness in 10 minutes ~ by Cori Warner



I don't like to cook, ya'll.

I'm pretty sure I've mentioned that before.

But the other day I had some chicken in the fridge that had been thawed out, and it was pretty much to the point I either had to cook it or throw it out.

I was gonna just throw it on the grill, but we're out of gas right now, so that idea died a short death.

So the chicken is still sitting there when I realize the dog is whining at me as I'm staring into the fridge. I decided he probably wants his lunch, and of course we are out of dog food, so off to Walmart I go for dog food.

While I was there, I saw some pretty amazing stuff, which I need to remember to tell ya'll about. Walmart has stepped up their game a bit, it seems.

Anyway, I'm wandering the aisles of Walmart, thinking what am I gonna do with that chicken? It finally occurred to me, since it was a nice Fall-ish kind of day, that chicken tortilla soup might be good.

I didn't have a recipe with me but, really, how hard can it be? I'd just grab the ingredients and throw them in a pot when I got home. Presto, dinner!

Here's what I picked up:

1- 28 oz can of enchilada sauce

1- Box of Chicken Broth

1- 7 oz can green chiles

1 can black beans

1 can whole corn

1 can Campbell's Fiesta Cheddar soup

1 jar extra chunky salsa

When I got home, I boiled the chicken in salt water until it was falling apart. If I hadn't already had chicken that needed cookin', I would have just bought two large cans of the canned chicken for this. I dumped all the ingredients in a big pot and stirred, then put in on low to simmer down and thicken up. I threw in a little bit of cumin and cilantro because I had it. To serve, I crushed some tortilla chips to use as a topper, along with some cheese.



This was a big hit; the family cleared out the pot! I don't know if it's cuz they really loved the soup, or because they were so shocked I had made a "homemade" (haha) meal. Either way, prep time (after the chicken was cooked) was less than 10 minutes. I think this would also freeze really well, for a cook ahead option. Definitely a recipe to keep in mind!

How to Make the Best Chicken Noodle Soup ~ by Amy Stafford

You need to know **How to Make the Best Chicken Noodle Soup** because it is perfect recipe for cool nights, watching the big game, sharing with friends or when you or your loved one are not feeling well, or you just want a hearty healthy filling soup.



Yes, this is the Best Chicken Noodle Soup EVER! I have been making and feeding this soup to my family for years. I always make extra and have several batches in the freezer, to pull out when needed. My freezer stash never lasts long because the boys will pull it out to enjoy for lunch or a late night snack. It is perfect to serve on Sunday's while watching your team play on the television or to take a big batch to serve at the tailgate.

I always get asked for the recipe after I have given a container to a sick friend, the comment is always the same "that is the Best Chicken Noodle Soup".

I make it with two whole chickens because I like to make extra to have some in the freezer to pull out when needed. If you don't want to make extra just cut everything in half for a wholesome healthy family dinner.



How to Make the Best Chicken Noodle Soup



Amy via Paula Deen

Serves:24

Prep time:20 mins

Cook time:1 hour 15 mins

Total time:1 hour 35 mins

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Ingredients

- 2 whole chickens
- 7 quarts of water
- 2 onions, peeled and diced
- 4 teaspoons Italian Seasoning
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 6 garlic cloves, minced
- 4 bay leaves
- 6 chicken bouillon cubes
- Kosher salt and pepper
- 4 cups sliced carrots
- 4 cups sliced celery
- 1 bag of egg noodles
- 2 cups sliced mushrooms, (if dried reconstituted)
- 6 tablespoon parsley, chopped
- $\frac{2}{3}$ cup cooking sherry
- 4 teaspoon rosemary, chopped
- 2 cups grated Parmesan
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cup heavy cream

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients up to Kosher Salt and Pepper to a large pot.
2. Add extra water if needed so that chickens are completely covered.
3. Cook for an hour or until chicken is tender. (no longer pink inside you can cut with knife to judge)
4. Remove chickens and place on a rimmed cutting board (you will need to catch juices from chickens)

5. Once chickens are cooled, shred all meat. Throwing away bones and skin.
6. Strain broth through a colander into a large bowl throwing away solids.
7. Place broth back into stock pot.
8. Bring broth to boil and add carrots and celery cooking for 10-12 minutes.
9. Add noodles and cook until al dente (follow directions on package).
10. Add chicken, and remaining ingredients. Stir to combine.
11. Serve.

Notes

To catch juice and broth from chickens while they cool; place chickens on wire rack that is sitting inside a rimmed baking sheet. The deeper the baking sheet the better as there may be quite a bit of juice released from chickens.

Pumpkin Spice Bundt Cake ~ by Amy Stafford

Oh this **Pumpkin Spice Bundt Cake** is going to knock off your fall socks.



With a new puppy in the house, I have been very busy. With the potty training, keeping my eye on what she might be chewing on next, and trying to remove it from her sharp little daggers, and in my spare time developing recipes for Thanksgiving I have been a wee bit frazzled. But her sweet puppy kisses make it all worth it.



Every November Jim and I throw a Thanksgiving themed Dinner Party the weekend before the actual holiday.

One of the challenges of throwing a Thanksgiving themed dinner party is giving your guests what they expect for Thanksgiving, the Turkey, stuffing and mashed potatoes while coming up with a few new dishes that they will love. I want those new dishes to be easy and quick to pull together and are uncomplicated to serve to a group.

On Thanksgiving you expect Pumpkin Pie, so to be creative I made a Pumpkin Pie Spice cake. Incorporating the pumpkin puree with the spices that make pumpkin pie, pumpkin pie that everyone loves, but in a moist cake which is easier to serve and can be made ahead of time. No need for whipped cream because the cake is topped with the delicious cream cheese glaze.





pumpkin spice cake



A HEALTHY LIFE FOR ME

Pumpkin Spice Bundt Cake



Amy Stafford adapted from Martha Stewart

Serves:8-10

Prep time:15 mins

Cook time:55 mins

Total time:1 hour 10 mins

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Ingredients

Pumpkin Spice Cake

- 2 cups cake flour (not self-rising), plus more for dusting
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ tablespoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- ½ cup (1 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature
- 1¼ cups packed light-brown sugar
- 2 large eggs, room temperature
- ½ cup buttermilk
- ¾ cups canned pumpkin puree
- Baking Spray for pan

Cream Cheese Glaze

- 4 ounces cream cheese, softened room temperature
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract
- 1 cup powdered sugar
- 1-2 Tbsp. whole milk, more until consistency needed

Instructions

Pumpkin Spice Cake

1. Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
2. Spray a 7-cup Bundt pan with baking spray or butter and dust with flour
3. Combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, salt, ginger, cinnamon, nutmeg, and cloves in a medium bowl and set aside.

4. Beat butter and brown sugar together on medium speed until pale and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes.
5. Add eggs, one at a time, beating well after each addition and scraping down sides of bowl.
6. Reduce speed to low and beat in flour mixture in 3 additions, alternating with the buttermilk.
7. Beat until just combined.
8. Add pumpkin puree, and beat until combined.
9. Pour batter into prepared pan and bake until golden, about 55 minutes or stick wooden skewer into cake and when it comes out clean.
10. Let cool on a wire rack for 30 minutes

Cream Cheese Glaze

1. Beat cream cheese, vanilla, and powdered sugar together on medium low speed with an electric mixer until creamy.
2. Add milk one tablespoon at a time, beating until the glaze reaches smooth somewhat pourable consistency. (similar to a yogurt thickness)
3. If the glaze gets too thin, add in more powdered sugar.

Pumpkin Martini ~ by Amy Stafford

This **Pumpkin Martini** Recipe is over the top yummy sipping fun.



The weather is back to being cold and I have started thinking about Thanksgiving recipes. We host a Thanksgiving Dinner Party every year and I wanted to come up with a great fun cocktail that we could serve. I have been working on a healthy pumpkin bread recipe and there has been plenty of pumpkin puree on hand. So cocktail + pumpkin puree = Pumpkin Martini.

I used coconut-almond milk which is what I have in the refrigerator (totally recommend it), but you could substitute with what ever milk you have on hand. I added a sprinkle of red pepper over top and it really added a nice little zing.



Pumpkin Martini



Amy Stafford

Prep time:3 mins

Total time:3 mins

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Ingredients

- 1 tablespoon pumpkin puree
- 1 tablespoon almond-coconut milk
- ½ ounce Cointreau
- 1½ ounce coconut tequila (regular tequila is fine)
- Fresh Ice
- Cinnamon stick (optional)
- sprinkle cinnamon
- sprinkle red pepper

Instructions

1. Put pumpkin puree, milk, Cointreau, Tequila, and Ice in a Martini Shaker and shake too cool and blend.
2. Pour into a martini glass.
3. Add cinnamon stick for fun.
4. Sprinkle cinnamon and red pepper over top.

Boo Cookies! Ghost shaped cookies without a cookie cutter ~ by Amy Ellis



44

You do not need to use a cookie cutter to get these simple, quick and tasty ghost shaped cookies. I brought these to a recent bonfire get together and they *DISAPPEARED!!!*

You will need:

- 1 roll of Pillsbury Sugar Cookie Dough
- 1 tube of black gel frosting
- For white frosting:
 - 1 cup powdered sugar
 - 2 tsp white corn syrup
 - 2 tbsp milk or whipping cream
 - ½ tsp vanilla extract (optional)



Instructions:

Preheat oven to 350

Place cookie dough in freezer for 15 minutes

Cut cookie dough into 24-32 slices (your preference)



Note: If you are only working with half the dough at the time, put the other half back in the freezer.



Roll each slice into a small worm or log-shaped piece and place lengthwise along the edge of the cookie sheet, making sure each piece touches the edge of the cookie sheet.



Press piece down slightly. Make it a little fatter at the bottom, and then pinch the top.

Try to shape it like a thin ghost.



Bake for 7-10 minutes, **BUT MAKE SURE TO CHECK THE COOKIES AT THE 7 MINUTE MARK**, as every oven is different. Take them out when the edges are golden brown.

Only let them cool for about 30 - 45 seconds before you try to loosen them from the cookie sheet. Transfer to cookie rack to cool completely.



To make a pourable frosting, mix all frosting ingredients together. You may need to add a bit more milk, but only add a teaspoon at a time.

Pour frosting over cookies and use a basting brush or a spoon to spread over the edges of the cookies. Let frosting dry for an hour or so, and then paint on the ghost faces with the black gel frosting.

One More Note: I tried some of the other cookie dough brands, but found that the Pillsbury brand worked the best for these cookies.

Pumpkin Pesto ~ by Amy Stafford

Pumpkin Pesto is so easy and delicious, a great fun healthy fall treat.



The CDC has come out to say that flu season has come early and is hitting several states pretty hard. I was leaving the gym on Monday and a few of my friends were walking out with me and I told them, to wash their hands. I guess its the mother in me, but sometimes the most obvious places we should wash we forget. There is nothing worse than the flu, and nothing worse than the flu during the holidays.

A great way to help fight infection is with our diets. Certain foods increase our bodies ability to fight disease and infection. If you want a simple way to increase the disease-fighting power of your meals, be generous with your use of high-quality herbs and spices.

This applies year-round, but as cold and flu season nears, you may want to consider spicing things up more than you might normally.

This great pesto has it all, herbs, citrus and garlic. Three big powerhouse nutrients for our body when it comes to anti oxidant and powers against infectious diseases like cold and flu.

Add in the the beta carotene of pumpkin along with the fact that it is a great source of fiber with few calories, this little pesto, is delicious and a great seasonal surprise.

This Pumpkin Pesto works great on grilled or toasted bread, crackers, on top of pasta, or on fish. You can freeze it up to pull out throughout the season.



Use an ice cube tray and fill individual slots with pesto, cover with plastic wrap and foil and freeze. You can pull out individual cubes throughout the next several months to use.



Pumpkin Pesto



Amy Stafford

Serves:10

Prep time:5 mins

Total time:5 mins

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Ingredients

- 1 cup fresh Parsley
- 1 cup of Basil
- 1 cup Pumpkin Puree
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup salty shelled pistachios
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup finely grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons honey
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon juiced
- Pinch of kosher salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon black pepper
- 2 tablespoons olive oil

Instructions

1. Add all ingredients except olive oil to food processor and run till combined.
2. Through tube add olive oil while processor is running.

Fall Crafting

Fall Burlap Wreath ~ by Alli Smith

I know that fall burlap wreaths have been all the rage for several years and yet I'm just now jumping on the bandwagon. I never really wanted one until I saw Denyse's at Glitter, Glue and Paint. You can find it [here](#), including a list of supplies that you will need. I really like it, so I used it as my inspiration.



So, on a Friday night, while the hubs and I watched something on TV that he had recorded a few days ago, I worked on my wreath. You know I can't do one thing at a time. I did look at several tutorials, but just couldn't get the hang of any of them, so I just did my own thing. That's how I roll! :)



Using my old work table made it much easier!

First off, I don't like to have to tie things on and that sort of thing, so I made my wreath without using hot glue, florist wire or anything. And I've tested it on my door for over a week before writing this post and nothing has dislodged. It still looks the same as the day I

made it. And, believe me, the grands have been in and out over the last few days so the front door has been slammed numerous times.

I started from the back of the wire wreath and just took turns pushing the roll of burlap up between the three wires, fluffing it and going in between the next wire, making sure I went between each of the three wires each time. I kept pushing the loops close together so the frame of the wreath wouldn't show. I kept checking the wreath to make sure I was making the same size loops. I noticed I had a tendency to get bigger and bigger with the loops, so I did have to adjust a few of them.

At the end, I left an area covered with burlap, but with smaller loops, because that is where I wanted to stick my flowers, pumpkin and grasses.



And, that's it. I have a clear command hook that I leave at the top of the glass on my front door to hang wreaths. I bet it didn't take over 20 minutes from start to finish. I should have timed it.

I did make a fall ribbon, but I thought it looked weird with all the fluff of the burlap going on. So I didn't attach it, this wreath is perfect, just the way it is!

DIY Fall Burlap Wall Designs- by Denise Murtha



It doesn't matter whether I am decorating for Christmas or for the Fall, I like my walls to also fit within the design. The [Current Prints](#), are great, but are just not as Fall-ish (I know...not a word) as I would like. To remedy that I decided to create my own Fall Wall, and you can, too!

Supplies needed:

- Canvas
- Burlap
- Scissors
- Hammer
- Stapler Gun
- Staples
- Wire
- Wire Cutter
- Iron
- Ironing Board
- Wreath

To Dress the Canvas

Step 1: Choose the Canvas size and buy the Burlap.



Step 2: Iron Burlap



Step 3: Lay Canvas on Burlap and cut excess Burlap



Step 4: Staple Burlap to Canvas



And there you have it...Canvas is Dressed!



For the Wreath

I could not find a finished Wreath that I wanted to use. It doesn't really matter what type of wreath you choose: one you bought or one you made. If you make your own, there are also so many different options so get creative.

I bought a Twig Wreath and Garland.



You will need to use the Wire and Wire Cutters



Attach the Garland to the Twig Wreath

Choose a Ribbon of some sort to hang the Wreath

I chose a chevron burlap but there are so many more options available. The ribbon will need to be wrapped around the wreath and secured with wire.



I didn't take a picture, but you will want center the wreath and ribbon and staple the ribbon to the back of the canvas to hold in place. I think the video that is included will provide you more specifics.

You now have a completed DIY Fall Burlap Wall Design. I knew you could do it!

denise designed



Chicken Wire Pumpkins ~ by Amy Ellis

Can you make a pumpkin out of chicken wire? Yes you can!! This project only took me about an hour and a half to do. Using 1" chicken wire and a pair of wire cutters, I was able to form several pumpkins in varying sizes with my bare hands... tucked inside a pair of gardening gloves, of course! Let's just say that after making a chicken wire lamp shade and chicken wire mini seamstress form, I've had a scratch or two. So wearing a pair of gardening gloves is the very first step in what I would call the easy-does-it guide for how to make a pumpkin out of chicken wire.

194



How to make a

pumpkin out of chicken wire:

Supplies

1 Roll of 24" length - 1" Chicken wire / fence

(Note: if you use a longer length roll, you will be able to make bigger, fatter pumpkins)

Craft wire cutters

Thin craft wire

Garden gloves (or any pair of safety type gloves)

Can of spray paint



Put on your pair of garden or safety gloves.

Unroll and cut pieces of chicken wire along the length of the roll. Allow about 6 inches on the top and bottom for twisting and forming the top and bottom of the pumpkins.

Cut several strips of craft wire into 2" pieces

You will also want to cut a piece several feet long for when you are about to wrap the pumpkin handle (this step will be several steps below.)

Form the chicken wire piece into a cylindrical shape with cut ends on top and bottom; crossing the length ends over each other by about 3 inches. Line up the wire honeycombs. Note: It works best if you form the cylinder by folding the chicken wire against the natural way it wants to curl up on itself.

Using the 2" strips of craft wire, tie off the lined-up section in two places along the seam. Make sure it is in the center area and not near the top and bottom.



While your gloves are still on, begin to gather the top or bottom end section with your hands and scrunch the ends together. Continue to scrunch together and start to twist the ends slightly . Repeat this step for the opposite end.



Next hold one of the ends (which should start looking like a pumpkin stem or handle) and while twisting, pull the outer, non-stem wire section outwards to form a bowl shape, if you will, around the stem or handle.

The top part should be subtle, and like the handle part of a pumpkin. At this point you can wrap the long length of craft wire around the make shift pumpkin handle.



The bottom section or stem-looking part should be more severe and deep, so that the outer-bowl area allows the pumpkin to stand up evenly. You can also wrap craft wire around the bottom stem if you choose; however I did not do this form mine.

Finally, pull, push and form the chicken wire - while still wearing those gloves - until you have the pumpkin shapes you are pleased with.

Spray paint your pumpkins white, black, orange or even blue!

Add more detail with craft paint or make them rusty with one of these [rust causing techniques](#)!!



I think these pumpkins look pretty darn cute next to the Re-Purposed Home Decor for Halloween project from last year.

Have you seen all the crazy fun Fall and Halloween pumpkin craft ideas going on around the web this season? I'm wishing I could make every one of them. Hopefully you think that these chicken wire pumpkins are in that category, too!

And if you do happen to make a few... just **BE SURE TO WEAR SOME GLOVES!!**

Easy Fall Wreath ~ by Amy Wireback

School is starting in a few weeks, summer will soon be ending and fall is right around the corner. This means cool nights, layered clothes, football and fall décor. I absolutely love fall and fall décor. Now, I don't normally decorate for a specific holiday, however I do love to decorate for the seasons. Harvest decorating is a big one at the Geib household and I can't resist a good fall wreath. This fall wreath is super duper easy to make and when I say anyone can make this wreath, I mean it. Not even kidding here.



ALWAYS NEVER DONE
Always Never Done

When I make a wreath, I don't normally have a clue as to what I want my wreath to look like. I either browse my craft area in the basement or go to the craft store and see what jumps out at me. In this case my own stock was lacking, so I went shopping.

As fun as it is to go shopping for a craft project it can sometimes be slightly overwhelming. I mean they really do have everything you could possibly want and it makes my head spin sometimes. The aisles are filled to the gills with every kind of fall flower you can think up and I just didn't feel like gluing and cutting this year. So for this wreath I decided, simplicity = happy girl.



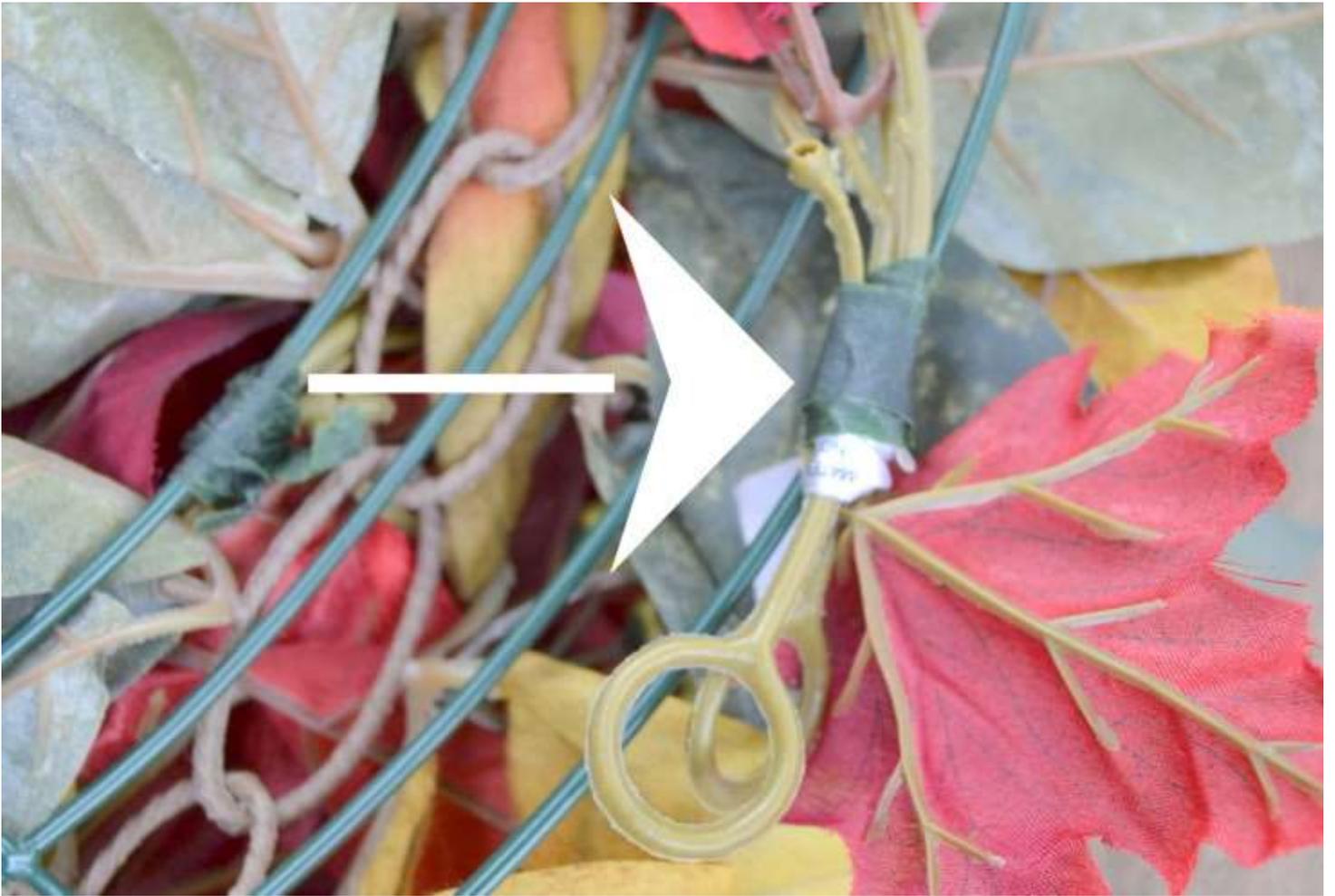
I picked out 2 of those long strips of leaves that are already all attached and ready to go. I picked one that had the colors of fall leaves and then I picked one that looks like they are magnolia leaves. They were both on sale and I had a coupon so they were super cheap 😊



Now you might be thinking this isn't very creative or whatever, but this is a great way to make your own wreath without spending a ton of money on a pre-bought one or having the hassle of picking out a ton of different flowers and gluing them or using wire to attach them to a wreath. I get asked all the time where I bought this wreath and to me that is the biggest compliment.

So, in order to make this you will need at least 2 strings of leaves or flowers (like shown in the picture above.) You will also need some florists tape or wire and a wire wreath.(I used florists tape.) I started by laying out the green magnolia line on the wreath and attached that at random places so that it was nice and firm.





Then I laid the fall colored leaf line over top of that and arranged them the way I like it and then taped that onto the wire wreath as well. That's it kids! It was that simple. It looks pretty darn cute if I say so myself.



ALWAYS NEVER DONE
Always Never Done



ALWAYS NEVER DONE
Always Never Done

Looks great from the street too!!! Enjoy



Faux Weathered Twigs ~ Like Driftwood, Almost! ~ by Amy Ellis

Twig projects! There's a lot of really cool ones out there on the web and done up so many different ways. Can't help it, I dig twigs and all their crafty possibilities. So, in an attempt to pull off one more beachy project for the summer using twigs, I knew that I wanted weathered looking twigs, rather than woody looking twigs because, hey... twigs have a more weathered look when they're hanging out around a beach!

I started by looking on Pinterest for how to make wood (or twigs) look weathered or like driftwood, and I found this tutorial on DIY Driftwood from Craftiments.com. There were quite a few tutorials out there, but this one for wood seemed to be the one that might be the closest to what I would need to do to get these twigs to look either like driftwood, or at least more beach-weathered than how they looked when I picked them up off the ground (no where near a beach).



So I am calling these faux weathered twigs (like driftwood, almost) because what I found in this process is that that can make the difference in how the twigs turn out depends on:

(A) the type twigs (from what trees), and

(B) the age of the twigs.

In other words, twigs with softer barks, like pine – and/or- twigs that have been laying on the ground longer ended up looking more like driftwood.

The other twigs ended up looking weathered and aged, but not quite like driftwood. So I had some variation in my results, but all in all, I ended up with beach-weathered looking twigs that worked perfectly for the project I was planning.



Having said all that, here is the 3 step process I used to weather twigs:

Supplies:

Twigs -(collected off the ground, a variation of twigs will give a nice textured result)

Cookie sheet

Big bucket- (ie: 5 gallon)

Hot water

Bleach

Small brush- (I used old toothbrush)

Razor blade- (for scraping, don't be scared!)

Sand paper- (optional)

Pair of garden shears -(optional—I only had wire cutters handy, as pictured, but garden shears will work much better if you need to snip off the branchy parts).



Process #1 – Baking

-Break twigs to the size of the cookie sheet~ OR ~ to the size you need for your project, leaving some excess.

-Lay on a baking sheet.

-Bake in oven at 250 F for about an hour, remove and cool.

Process #2 – Soaking

-Fill a bucket with hot water.

-Add 1/8 cup or so of bleach.

-Place twigs in the water and soak (anywhere from 15 minutes to 1 hour, longer if desired).

Process #2 – Scraping and Brushing (Sanding and Snipping optional)

-Remove one twig at a time and start pulling away the bark. For some twigs it will come off rather easily.

-Scrape the bark with the razor on the pieces that seem to want to come off, but are just a little stuck.

-Brush and scrape the under layer of the pieces that the bark has been removed from, but still showing bark residue.

-Test the twig pieces that DO NOT seem like the bark is loose at all. If the bark does not seem to budge, then stop there and don't bother trying to remove it. You will be there a long time. Once these pieces dry, they should still have a more weathered look than when you started, (a bleached-out look, if you will.)

-Lightly sand, if desired (I did not do this step)

-Snip off twig branches (if required for your twig project)

-Let all twigs dry in the sun.

Note: the grouping of twigs I did took me about 1-1/2 hrs to brush, scrape, etc...



Remember:

Age and type of twigs will give different results.

But when grouped together it will show as a nice variation of weather twigs.



Once they dry, these beachy, faux weathered, “almost like driftwood” twigs will be ready for your twig project. I think they would even work well for rustic, fall crafts.



(Here is a sneak peak of my upcoming project. Bet you can't guess what it is! Click right here to see.)

I realize this seem like a lot of work, but I did the baking part one day, and the soaking/brushing part in the afternoon of the next day, and it really wasn't that hard, nor did it take very long.. (suuuuure, you are probably saying right about now,) but honestly... it didn't...I'm serious...not lying...trust me..honestly...pinky swear!

A Paper Wreath from Old Hymnals ~ by Cori Warner



Today, I decided to start making some wreaths for Fall Holidays and Christmas. "Christmas!" you say. Yup, the cooler weather that moved in this last week reminded me that Fall is on its way, with holidays not too far behind! Time to get busy!

I've been waiting all year to make some of these paper wreaths. I've loved them since they first showed up on Pinterest, and I wish I could track back to the originator and give credit where credit is due cuz they are super-cute. The main thing holding me back was a lack of music paper. Well, at an online auction a few weeks ago, I hit paydirt and bought four Baptist Hymnal from the 1960s. Finally, I had the sheet music, in the right size to make some of these wreaths.

So I dashed off to Hob Lob and bought some straw wreaths and a whole lot of glue sticks. And they have been just waiting for me to get to them.

I have to say, I was a little reluctant to pull the hymnals apart. First, I'm a book lover, and these are fairly old books, with even older songs in them. Secondly, I think I half expected my old pastor to show up and slap my hand if I really started tearing these up. Sometimes, it's hard to overcome your raising. But today, it's time to bite the bullet and get these started.

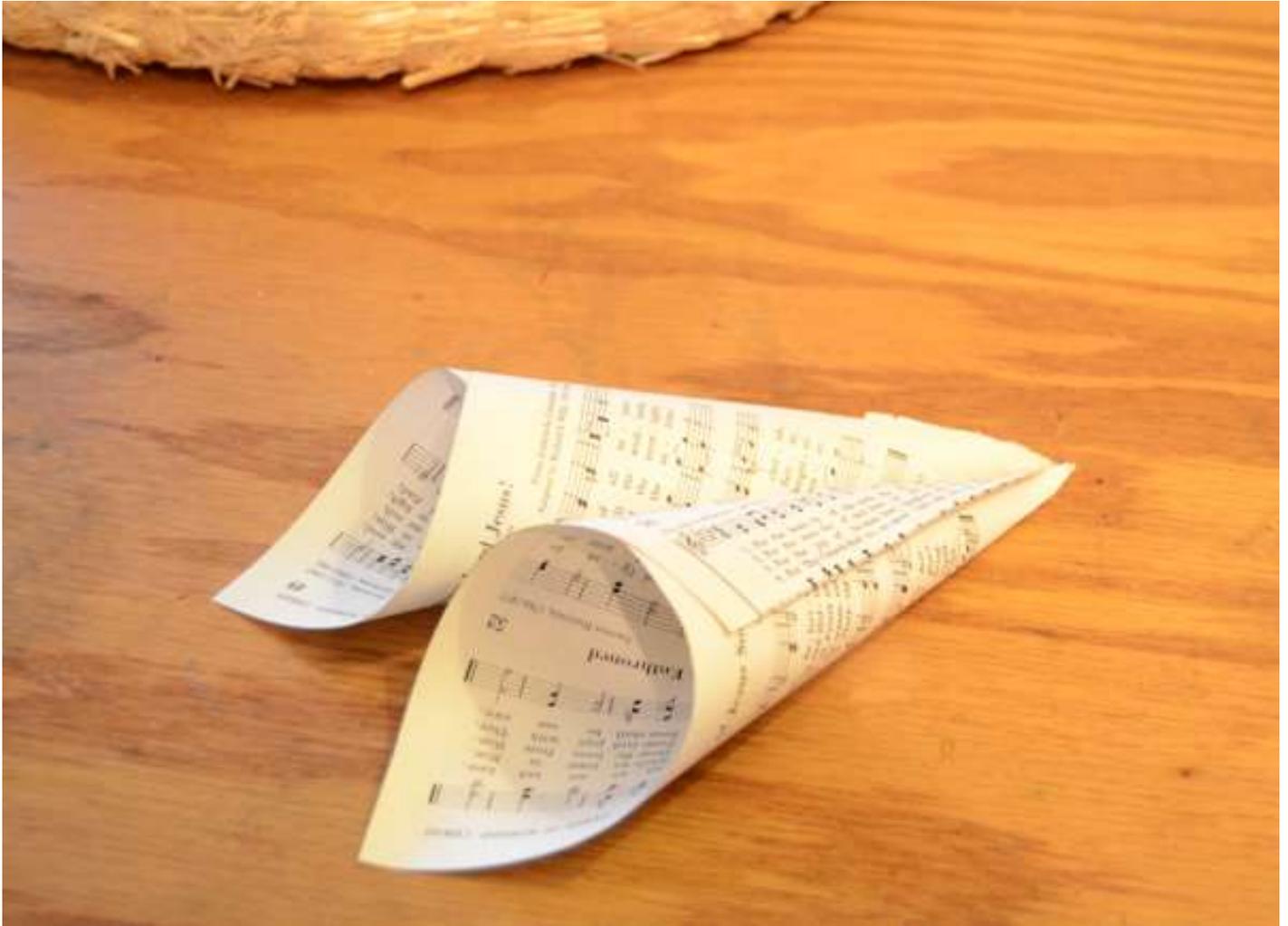
The hymnal proved to be super easy to take apart; the glue was basically powder, and the stitching just pulled right out. I set aside the Christmas songs to be used on the top layer of the wreath. They aren't really that visible, but it's kinda cool to know that if I look for Christmas songs on this wreath, they are there!

Making the Wreath

After I pulled out about 100 pages, I then folded the bottom portion of the page up to make a square. I just left the folded part on the page, but if you're a perfectionist, I suppose I could have cut them. Folding is faster, I think, so that's the way I decided to go. I made sure I kept the frayed edge to the left while I was folding, so it would be covered up in the final wreath.



When all the pages were folded, I then make the cones by folding the bottom edge to the left edge. I then put two small dots of hot glue along the edge to hold the cone. Three blisters in, I switched to my low-temper glue gun because the pages were really thin!



After I had made about 30 cones, it was time to glue the first (back) layer on the wreath on. I glued them on so that the widest parts of the cones were touching, and the points were more or less the same distance from the straw form. The straw proved a little bit difficult to glue to, so I had to hold each cone until the glue cooled.



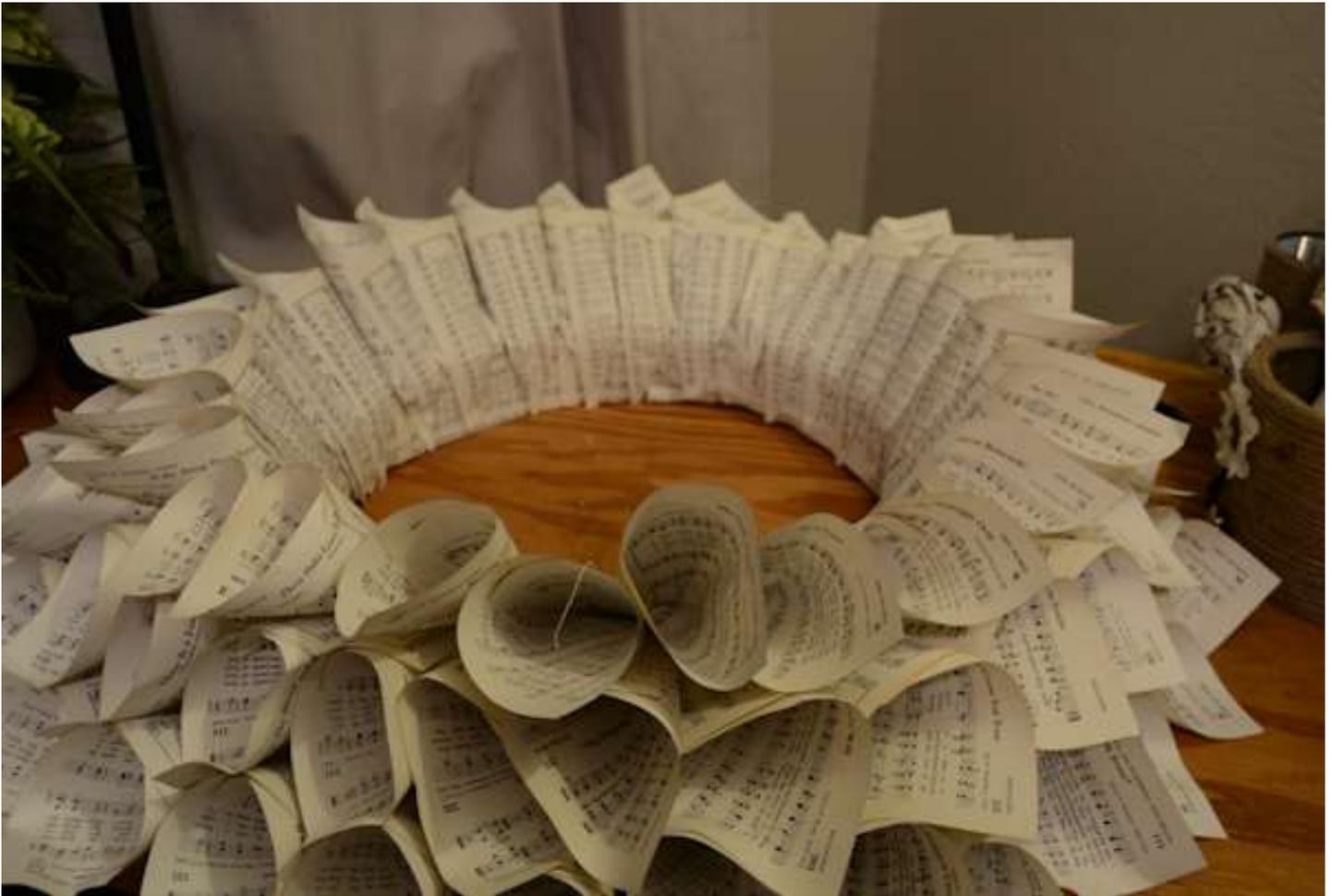
After I had the first layer, it was back to making cones, and I just finished up the whole pile. I think I ended up using 29-30 cones per layer, but the number will vary with the size of the wreath form. The second layer went on the top of the form. I tried to get the point of each cone to align with the space between the cones on the bottom layer.



When I started to put on the final (top) layer, I realized that part of the wreath form was going to show, so I lined the inside of the wreath with torn pages before putting on the final layer. Next time, I will do this before the second layer, I think.



I forgot to mention that when gluing the second and third layers, I had to glue at the tip of the cone, and then about $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way up the cone, so they would lie flat on the wreath form. Finally, I looked over the wreath and if there were any spaces or gaps, I glued the cones together so it would look nice and full.



Although the process was a bit tedious, it wasn't difficult, and I had all the cones made and glued on the form in about 90 minutes. The final step is to glue a ribbon loop around the wreath to hang in with. I used burlap and some red and white toweling fabric I have. I plan on adding some Christmas greenery to the top of the ribbon, as soon as it shows up at Hobby Lobby :p. But here is the wreath and ribbon, all finished! Right now it's hanging on my tobacco-drying rack, and will likely stay there until I have a chance to go get some storage bins big enough to put it in!



Although, I kind of like it hanging on my iron almost-window frames, too. But then I would need a second wreath, cuz I have two of these in my living room. Actually, I like the idea of two Christmas wreaths....



Then, because Christmas really is five months away, I decided to add a Fall sort of bow to this wreath so I could go ahead and hang it up and enjoy it for a while. I like the little bird, and the key.



And since I've only made one so far, I've hung it on the tobacco rack in my dining room for now.



Back To School

Daycare Teacher Appreciation Gift - "CHAPPY" You're Our Teacher! ~ by Sarah Martin

Welcome to the 2nd installment of my 3-part Daycare Teacher Appreciation Gift series!

You can get a little more background about why I am writing 3 installments by reading [Part 1 of this series](#). But in a nutshell, I wanted to do a little something for our teachers EVERY DAY of our 3-day week at daycare to show just how thankful we are for what they do! So, boom! Three parts for 3 days! Makes sense, right? :-)

Well anyways, this is what we did for Day 2 of Teacher Appreciation Week. Make sure you check out what we did for [Day 1](#) and [Day 3](#)!

Daycare Teacher
Appreciation Gift
Idea Series
Part 2

"CHAPPY" you're our teacher
~ with FREE printable ~

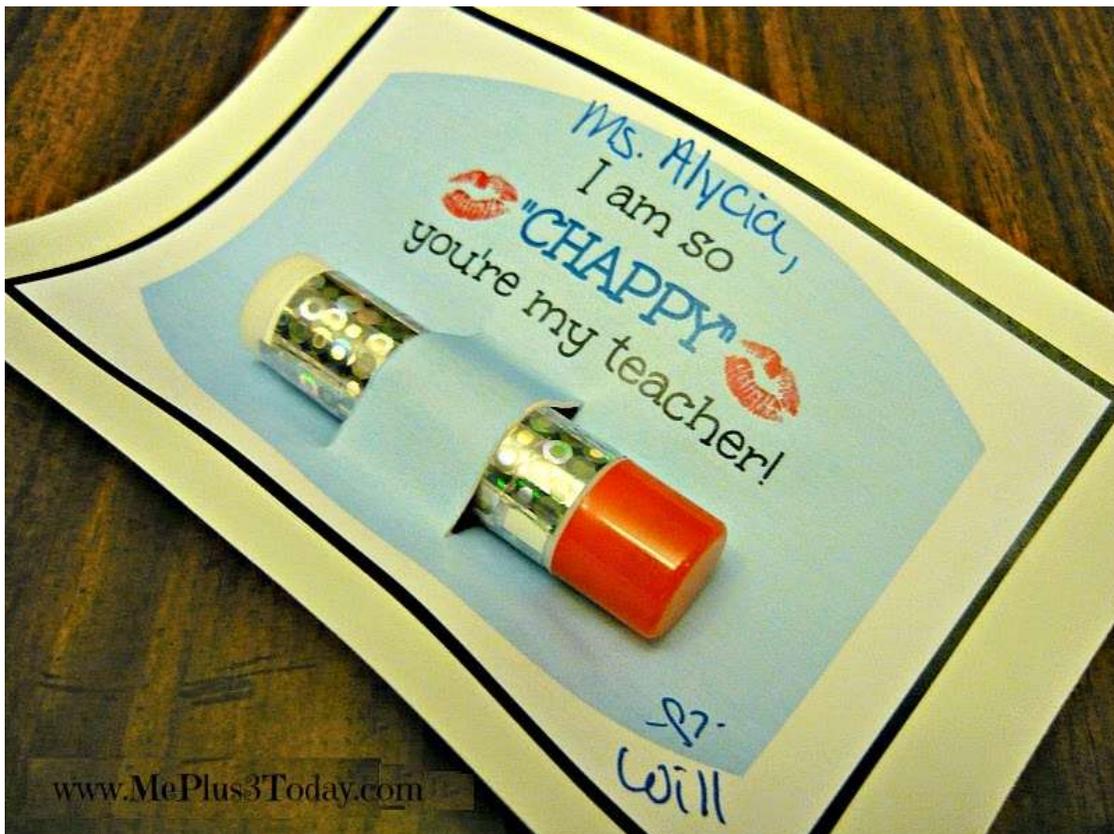
from

MePlus3Today.blogspot.com

I put together these little cards that held a lip balm (*that I did a little DIY customization to*), and it said *We are so "CHAPPY" you're our teacher!* This one was plural because it was from both Violet and Charlotte.



I also put together one from Will that is in singular form. :-)



So, what do you think? :-)

I know I'm a little biased, but I thought they turned out kind of cute, for someone who is a lazy crafter! :-)

First, I was inspired to do a little DIY customization to the lip balm (*I say lip balm because isn't Chapstick a trademark or brand name?*) from [this super cute pin by Infarrantly Creative that I found on Pinterest](#), which led to a [super simple tutorial on How to Make Glittered Chapstick](#).

I thought adding a little glitz and glam would make this really simple gift feel just a little more special!

I had purchased a bunch of these lip balm packages during the after Christmas clearance at Meijer. They were only 50 cents per pack making each lip balm only 25cents! So these little teacher gifts were still very inexpensive, and right on budget for me!



I didn't have fancy glitter tape, but I did have some shiny, glossy, laser tape that I got from the dollar store! Ooo la la, right? :-)



I basically did the same thing they did in the tutorial, but with my cheap-o tape, and... Voila! Some seriously pimped out lip balm tubes! :-)

For the actual card, I was inspired by [another idea I pinned on Pinterest](#), which were these super cute "[Merry Kissmas and Chappy New Year!](#)" printable cards from [An Organized Family](#). I actually made these cards this past Christmas and gave them away to our mailman and a few co-workers, [like I talked about in my previous blog!](#) They really were cute, so pin her blog to be ready for next Christmas!

Well, as you can see in her tutorial, she just printed out the card on cardstock paper, and cut 2 slits to slip the tube through.

I didn't have cardstock on hand, so I improvised... I printed on regular paper and glued it (just using a regular old glue stick) to the 4x6 index cards that I talked about in the [Day 1 Teacher Appreciation Gift](#). Maybe it wasn't as neat as if I'd printed on cardstock, but I think my method worked out OK! :-)

And this is how all 6 of the "*CHAPPY*" *you're our teacher* cards turned out! They're cute, right?



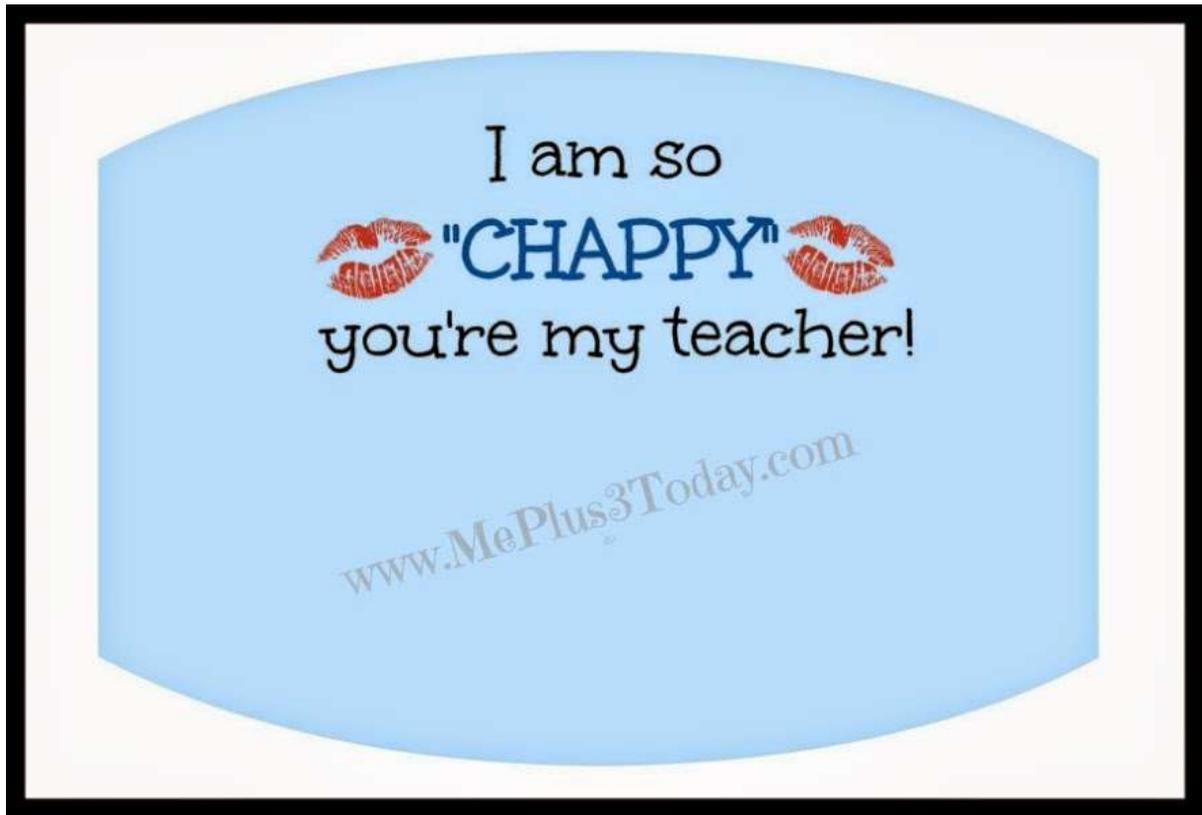
MePlus3Today.blogspot.com



Well, if you think these cards are cute, then guess what? I made a FREE printable for you! It's my first time ever sharing a printable, so I hope this works! Please comment or email me if you are having any issues and I will try to resolve them ASAP!

Also, please note that these are for PERSONAL use only and cannot be sold or distributed in any way other than this e-book, or a share. You are welcome to share this post or write about it, just please send people back to this post and give proper credit to Me Plus 3... TODAY! Thanks in advance! :-)

OK, I made one for each version, the plural and the singular. So choose what works best for you! And note, these will not print with my watermark on them, I just included that on the blog post images. :-)



[CLICK HERE TO PRINT: I am so "CHAPPY" you're my teacher!](#)



[CLICK HERE TO PRINT: We are so "CHAPPY" you're our teacher](#)

Back To School Tips and Tricks ~ by Shauna Krantz

We would like to introduce Bernadyn Nettles of [B is for](#). B is an avid blogger of food, family, parenting, crafts and so much more! We have collaborated with B and asked her to bring you some great tips and tricks for heading back to school.

We would also like to thank [Party Hearty Designs](#) for their adorable Back To School pocket survival guide! Lindsay created the guide to be included in the [first issue](#) of Ella and Annie Magazine! Get yours free [here](#)!



In B's words...

Summer break is winding down to an end and that means a new school year is fast approaching. If you have a child in your life that will be going to school this year, then you know that there are preparations to make. Returning to school is a big adjustment even if it's not your child's first time going to school.

Every student at any age feels anxious and nervous. The idea of facing new challenges, making new friends, adjusting to a new schedule and a new class setting are negative thoughts that can discourage your child from wanting to start a new school year.

However, there is also that feeling of excitement a new school year brings. Turn all the negatives into positives; explain that meeting new classmates means making new friends and those social and academic challenges are a chance to learn and grow.

Here are some tips and tricks to prepare your child mentally and physically, along with a list of other suggestions to prepare you and your child to the start of a successful school year.

“I don’t want to go to school.”
Tips to Mentally Prepare

Acknowledge that your child may be worried about school and let him discuss his concerns with you if this is the case. For most children, they do not want to go to school because of the fear of the unknown. The main thing to remember is to focus on the positive and the reality that school will soon start. Prepare him mentally for starting school or returning to school by reminding them that school will begin in a few weeks. This will help him get used to the idea that there will be changes to his daily routine. Have the date clearly marked on visible calendars at home. Younger kids can count down to the first day by crossing off each day that leads up to the big day.

If they are scared or nervous, address that proactively. For younger children and children who will be entering school for the first time, help them ease their anxiety by preparing them in a fun way so that their excitement pushes down the fears.

Some tricks that may help:

- Start teaching your child at home or review what they have already learned the previous year.
- Use flash cards, read books with them at their reading level, play games that help teach them their numbers, shapes, colors and the alphabet.
- Create art and crafts projects with them that represent school being fun
- Pick up positive books that talk about children their age going to school

A few suggestions on books are:

- The Kissing Hand by Audrey Penn
- The Berenstain Bears Go to School by Stan and Jan Berenstain
- Off to First Grade by Louise Borden
- Maisy Goes to Preschool by Lucy Cousins

Watch movies or shows that show kids in their grade range going to school. Here are some recommendations by Scholastic on movies and shows to watch to ease school anxiety:

- Barney: Let’s Play School
- Franklin Goes to School
- Rainbow Fish: School of Fish

“I’m not ready to go to school.”
Tips to Physically Prepare

A good way to overcome the feeling that you are not ready to do something is through practice because practice relieves anxiety and builds confidence.

- Help your child feel more ready to go to school by practicing the routine of a normal school day, starting from the morning routines of going to school up to the time of returning home.
- If possible, take him to school to meet his teacher and walk around the entire school with him, including his new classroom, cafeteria, school office and the pick-up/drop-off area.
- Make it clear to him how he will be getting home. Explain all the instructions in a fun, positive way, reassuring him that he can do it and that teachers will be there to guide him.

Practice the new sleep routine a couple weeks early if it is different than his sleep schedule during the summer. Do not have him staying out late on weeknights. Encourage healthy-eating so he does not feel sluggish and weighed down. This brings us to tips about food preparations for back to school.

An important part of back to school planning is having a well-balanced eating schedule that flows well with the busy week.

- Have a set meal plan set out for those upcoming busy weeknights and decide who will be cooking the food.
- Cut down on preparation time by cutting any vegetables and meat in advance. Freeze these pre-cut vegetables and meat so they will be ready when you need them.
- Make a big batch when you do cook a meal and freeze half of it to eat for another night. Think about meals you can cook in the slow cooker instead of ones you have to stand over and watch.

Shop for adequate amounts of food to bring on school days if your child is bringing his lunch and prepare lunches the night before.

Check to see if you need to buy new lunch boxes and food storage containers when you do your back to school shopping. Think about buying containers that are reusable so they can last all year. It will save you money in the long run and will help out the environment, too.

[Download](#) your free Back To School Survival Kit from [Party Hearty Designs!](#)

Holiday Entertaining

Thanksgiving Tablescape ~ by Alli Smith

I feel like a magazine editor today! It's October (at least it was when I wrote this) and I did my Thanksgiving Day Tablescape photo shoot this morning. Too bad I didn't have an assistant to put it all away after the shoot. At least I'm not taking Thanksgiving pics in the summer. That would be too weird to me.

I'm excited about some new finds that I added to my tablescape this year. If you missed 2012's, you can find it [here](#). And you will notice that I had a smaller table then that seated eight and the grand kids had their own table. That was just days before I found an awesome deal on my current table that seats 14-16.

There's something about Thanksgiving Day that causes me to want to dress everything up just a wee bit, but with a rustic feel. We have our feast at 6:00 p.m. and we always dine by

candlelight even though my children jokingly say they can't see the food. At least I think they are joking! Our youngest daughter (now 25 - whew!) has always lit the candles - well, as soon as she got old enough so that she wouldn't burn her fingers or burn down the house.

And I always try to stay on a budget by reusing things like my orange cloth napkins I used last year and scouting the yard for a centerpiece. I really don't like to spend a lot on a centerpiece and I like to scour the countryside for flowers, leaves, etc.

And, of course, as always, right when I get everything set up, I have a light bulb moment and think of something I should have done that I didn't. So on the day of, I think I will use some burlap material I have to make a wider and longer table runner to go under the table runner I used. It will add more texture to the table. And those dumb candles would not stay straight no matter what I did. Believe me, I wrestled with them forever. And I should have poured the cranberry juice from the fridge into the stemmed glasses to add some more color. Oh, well.

After rereading the above paragraph a million times, I threw caution to the wind and on November 1st I redid the photo shoot. Yep, I completely reset the table and redid the centerpiece. I even added the chilled cranberry juice (a new bottle, of course) to the glasses. It's amazing what a little added texture and color can do for the table and to the pics.

Also, I wasn't happy with the napkin placement the first time - a little boring to me - just tucked under the salad plate. I wanted napkin rings but a set of 12 specialty napkin rings were not in my budget. I had rather spend that money on Christmas gifts. So I improvised and love what I came up with for just a few bucks. (The pics are toward the end of the post.)

I absolutely love my new dishes. I haven't even shown them to my children. They've been tucked away in a kitchen cabinet patiently awaiting Thanksgiving Day. I bought them at World Market back in early September when they were having a really big sale. Score!



I was going to put my silverware on top of the salad plate, but the pattern is just too pretty to cover up! So I found some awesome silverware envelopes that I am in love with. I could have easily done them myself by buying the envelopes and using a rubber stamp, but they were actually cheaper already done up. Remember, I'm all about easy! (Note: On my second redo, I did place the envelopes on top of the salad plate to give the place setting more eight.)



Yep, the knife, fork and spoon are all tucked away in their own little envelope. After the photo shoot, I just stored them in a drawer until Thanksgiving since they are all clean and shiny and ready for dinner. That's one less thing for me to do the night before. I always set the table the night before Thanksgiving or early Thanksgiving morning.

I'm also in love with my rustic tray that picks up the red in the dishes. It was a find from a picking expedition (shout out to my R3 group). I piled my handmade pumpkins, dried hydrangeas from my flower garden and fall flowers left over from my fall burlap wreath into the tray. In case you missed how to make my fall burlap wreath, you can find it [here](#). I learned how to make the pumpkins out of books from Upcycled Treasures. You can find out how to make them [here](#). I am crazy about those rustic looking pumpkins. Pretty things just make me happy!



I tied burlap ribbon around the chairs and the place cards are names written on fall leaves attached to the burlap ribbon with pins.



All of this planning for Thanksgiving has really got me in the mood for my cornbread dressing and homemade dumplings! Plus, it's actually cold here today.

Here's some pictures of my first photo shoot. It just didn't have enough texture and depth to it.





anaffievent.com



Here's my second photo shoot!







anallievent.com



I know it's a little early, but . .



Other Sources:

Tableware and Table Runner - World Market (in store)

Envelopes & Candelabras - Save on Crafts (online) (This is probably my number one go-to source. They have everything under the sun!)

Homemade Napkin Rings - flowers and findings (those key ring things) from Hobby Lobby

Happy Fall, Ya'll

We hope you've enjoyed these Autumn Inspirations as much as we've enjoyed creating them for you! For more fantastic home décor, DIY projects and tutorials, recipes, and lifestyle tips, be sure to visit our blogs!

In the meantime, may your days be filled with all the blessings of the coming seasons; faith, family, and love.

Warm Regards,

Alli, Cori, Denise, Jennifer, and all five Amy's!