

the upside-down bowl

by Martina Lantin



Leaf Bowl, 13 in. (33 cm) in diameter, thrown and altered earthenware, cone 03, 2010.

Clay naturally wants to move centrifugally so making large bowls can be challenging because it is difficult to keep the form on center. I make them from wheel-thrown parts that are assembled when leather hard. Capitalizing on the physics of working on the wheel, I throw the bases for the bowls upside down. By working the clay up and in from a centered ring, I'm able to form the base of a large bowl working from the rim to the foot without having to follow up with trimming. Unique asymmetrical bowls are made possible through this method of throwing and altering. When cutting this section from the wheel,



hold the wire tight to the wheel head as you only pull it through one edge of the piece. Then allow the spin of the wheelhead to cut the piece off completely. This help prevent any distortion in the shape of bottomless forms. When in doubt, you can always wait until the piece has begun to firm up.

Making the Parts

The bowl shown is made from three parts—base, bottom, and top. The base, a thrown slab, is added last; and the bottom is a basic bowl that’s thrown upside down. The top is an open ring, and is the finished rim.

Begin throwing the bottom by making a bottomless centered ring. Throw upward and inward to create a pleasing curve (*figure 1*). Define the rim, keeping in mind that it will serve as the foot. Rib both the interior and exterior to create a graceful arc (*figure 2*). Cut this section from the wheel holding the wire tight to the wheel head.

Throw the top section right-side up from a centered ring. Explore a variety of rim profiles, being conscious of the edges and the shadows different shapes may promote. In this process it’s especially important to remember to leave a bit of a ‘foot’ on the



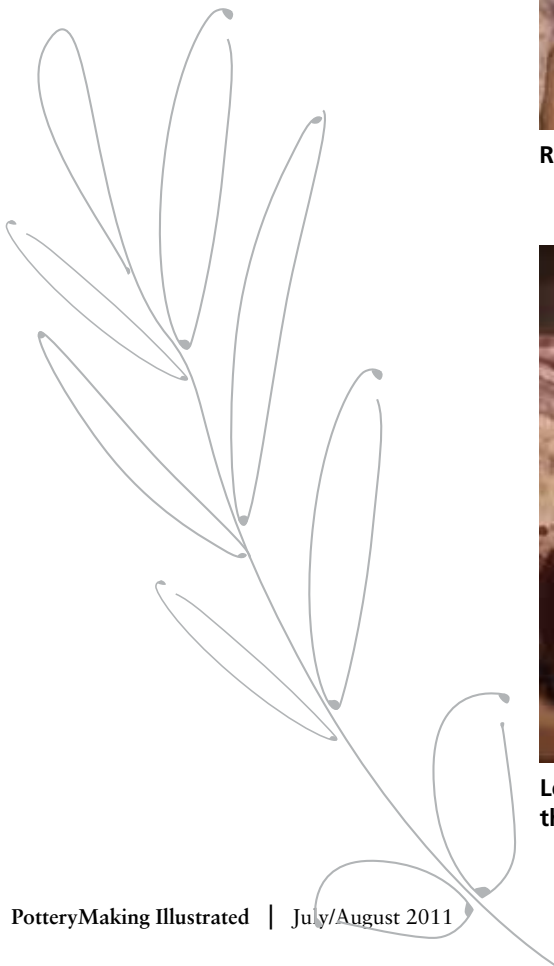
1 Make a bottomless ring, throw upward and inward to create a pleasing curve.



2 Rib the interior and exterior to create a graceful arc.



3 Leave a bit of a foot on the rim section to help it stay attached to the wheelhead during throwing





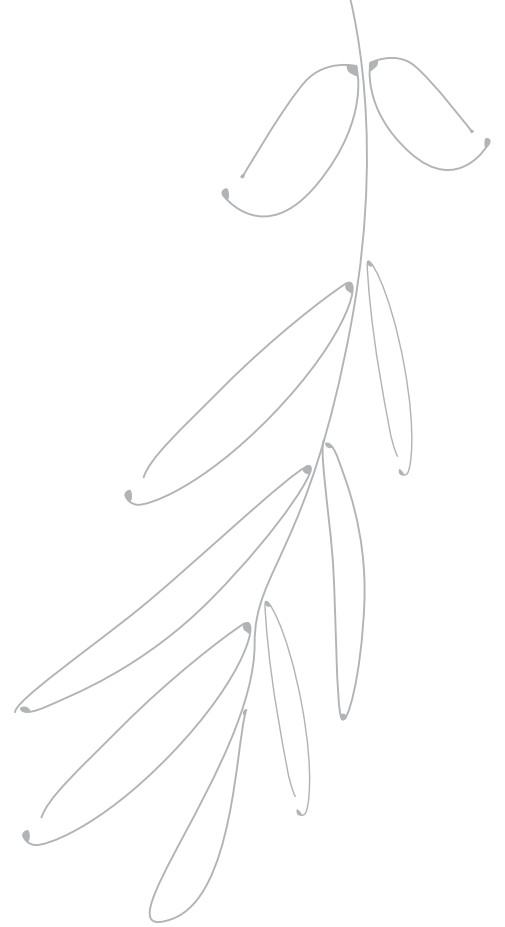
4 Use a cheese slicer to refine and prepare the raw edge of the bottom for attaching the rim.



5 Cut the rim into two pieces and score the bottom edge of each one.



6 Score, slip, and attach the sections to the bottom piece, then compress the clay on both sides with a rib.



rim section to help the wall stay attached to the bat while pulling up the clay (*figure 3*). Wait to cut the rim from the bat until you're ready to attach it. Waiting helps keep the rim from warping.

Altering the Forms

Once the bottom has reached a firm leather-hard stage, turn it over and use a cheese slicer to refine and trim excess clay from the raw edge for attaching the top section (*figure 4*). The asymmetry of the bowl begins to reveal itself at this stage. Remain conscious of creating a sense of fluidity and generosity as you work. Next, cut the rim or top section into two pieces (*figure 5*) and attach using the traditional score and slip technique followed by compressing the clay on both sides with a rib. (*figure 6*).

Attach the base last. Measure the bottom opening with calipers and cut and shape the base slab accordingly (*figure 7*). Score and slip the base (*figure 8*) and add an additional coil inside the foot ring to reinforce the seam. Using a wet, pointed brush, clean and compressing the joint. While I strive for crisp visible seams and joints, these steps may also be applied to



7 Measure the bottom aperture with calipers and shape the base slab accordingly.



8 Score and slip the base and add an additional supporting coil inside the foot ring.

creating a seamless “upside down bowl” where the transitions blend together.

Decorating the Surface

Once the bowls have reached the stiff leather-hard stage, they're ready to be coated in deflocculated slip. Because of the low water content, deflocculated slip can be used on drier clay without the risk of over-saturating the piece or having the slip crack off due to excessive shrinkage as the piece dries. I start with a batch of slip that's the consistency of thick glaze.

Before dipping the bowls, I spend time considering how the motion of the dip will affect the flow of the slip and serve to emphasize the construction of the piece. I also make sure I am able to have a firm and comfortable grasp on the piece. The bowls are dipped in one continuous motion and hung on their sides as the slip continues to sheet off (*figure 9*). Once done, the bowl is placed on newspaper (easier for cleaning up both the table top and the foot ring).

After the bisque firing, I continue decorating the surface. When decorating bowls, I see it as a game between the interior and exterior of the form. Holding the piece a little below eye level, I imagine the bowl as a centerpiece, decorated in a way that offers a varied perspective depending on where you are at the table. ■

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9 Dip the bowl into deflocculated white slip and hold it upside down to let the excess slip run off.

White Slip for Earthenware
Cone 06–02

Nepheline Syenite	15 %
Talc	15
Ferro Frit 3124	10
Ball Clay	40
EPK Kaolin	20
	100 %

Can add 7.5% zircopax to opacify or titanium dioxide to warm and opacify the slip.

The deflocculant, Darvan 7, is diluted with water (1 part Darvan 7 to 4 parts water) and slowly added to the clay slurry by the capful until the desired consistency is reached.