

Queen of Diamonds Socks

KRISTI SCHUELER



Photo by Joe Coca

Spin Off
e PATTERNS

Queen of Diamonds Socks:

Dyeing to knit from the toe up

BY KRISTI SCHUELER

ONLY A MONTH after purchasing my first spinning wheel at the 2005 Estes Park Wool Market, I made a trip home to visit family and friends. Much of the visit was spent checking out all the fiber and yarn sources within a two-hour radius of my parents' dairy farm in west-central Minnesota. I came back with a variety of souvenir fibers for spinning. It took some time to work up to using my good fiber but, by early spring 2006, I had experienced some success dyeing my own yarn, and I finally pulled out the plastic wrap, Kool-aid, and Wilton's food coloring to try my hand at dyeing some of my souvenir fiber.

Dyeing fiber

First, I divided 3.1 ounces of Bluefaced Leicester top from Detta's Spindle in Maple Plain, Minnesota, into two sections. I carefully folded each section into a small bundle and gently wrapped one end of the strip horizontally around the middle and tucked the end in. I then soaked the bundles in lukewarm water with a touch of clear dish soap for several hours.

To mix my dyes, I filled condiment squeeze bottles two-thirds full with one part white vinegar and one part warm water. Then I mixed my dyes using various food colorings and Kool-aid packets. My method was unscientific although I used a color wheel to guide my decision about the colors needed to achieve the look I was aiming for. I started

Dyeing safely

Follow the safety precautions on the labels for handling dye powder and dye solutions. Always wear a dust mask and gloves when handling dye powder and work in a well-ventilated area. Protect your skin and eyes from dye solutions. Never use your dye equipment for food preparation.

with gel food colorings and placed a small pea-sized amount into each of the squeeze bottles. I tested the colors on white paper towels and continued to tweak them with small dabs of food coloring about the size of a seed bead or ¼ package of Kool-aid until I was satisfied with the resulting red-violet, turquoise, orange, and fuchsia dyes.

Once my colors were mixed, I drained the water from the bundles and lightly squeezed out excess moisture. I unwound each bundle of fiber onto a piece of plastic wrap laid out on my dyeing table. Using the squeeze bottles, I dyed horizontal stripes across the two lengths of top simultaneously so they would match. I found the pointed tips of the condiment bottles useful for getting the dye into the center of the fiber. I used mostly the red-violet and fuchsia with accents of the orange and turquoise dyes. After the top was saturated in color, I wrapped each length in the plastic wrap while applying some pressure to help the dye saturate the fiber. I sealed it closed by twisting and folding the ends under the roll to contain the dye.

I placed the wrapped bundles in a wire strainer set over boiling water in a large canner devoted to dyeing. I put the lid on and steamed the packets for 15 minutes. Using tongs, I redistributed the bundles to ensure even heating and steamed for an additional 15 minutes before I shut off the heat and let the top cool to room temperature over several hours. After the top cooled, I removed the plastic wrap, rinsed the wool gently, and hung the pieces across my fireplace mantel on hangers to dry.

Spinning

To ensure I had not felted the fibers, I predrafted the fibers by gently and evenly pulling on small sections of the top to help





Not long after Kristi Schueler bought her first wheel, she was experimenting with Kool-aid dyeing for socks.

Project Notes

Size: U.S. women's shoe size 6-7 (7½-8).

Fiber: 3½-4 ounces Blue-faced Leicester top.

Yarn: 350 yards balanced 2-ply yarn averaging 20 wraps per inch and 4-5 twists per inch.

Gauge: 7½ sts and 11 rows = 1 inch in stockinette st.

Needles: 2 U.S. size 1 16-inch circular needles.

Notions: Cable needle and tapestry needle.



Here is a close look at the pre-drafted Blue-faced Leicester top that was spun to make these special socks.



You can see the long lengths of colors in the singles as they relax on a Majacraft bobbin.

PHOTOS BY KRISTI SCHUELER

them open up. I spun the singles with a Z-twist using a semiworsted short forward draw on my Majacraft Suzie Pro at a ratio of 10:1. I spun each section of top on a single bobbin and then plied the two together to retain the color shifts created in the dyeing process. I lost track of which end I started with, so they didn't ever really match up. The singles were plied in the S direction using the 12.5:1 ratio for 4.75 twists per inch. This yielded about 350 yards of 20 wraps-per-inch two-ply yarn with long gradual color shifts.

To celebrate my very first pair of handspun socks, I made an extra-special design. I adapted a pattern from Leslie Stanfield's *The New Knitting Stitch Library* (Lark Books, 1999). I played with a bunch of options that were plays on diamonds. My husband loved the diamond ribs on the back of the socks, so consequently, there is a King of Diamonds pair in the works, but I'm not sure I'm ready to commit to a whole deck of socks. I was a little nervous that 350 yards of yarn might not be enough for

my standard sock formula, so I decided to dust off my toe-up sock knitting skills. I used a scale to split the yarn in half by weight as equally as possible and then selected what appeared to be the slightly smaller ball to knit the first sock.

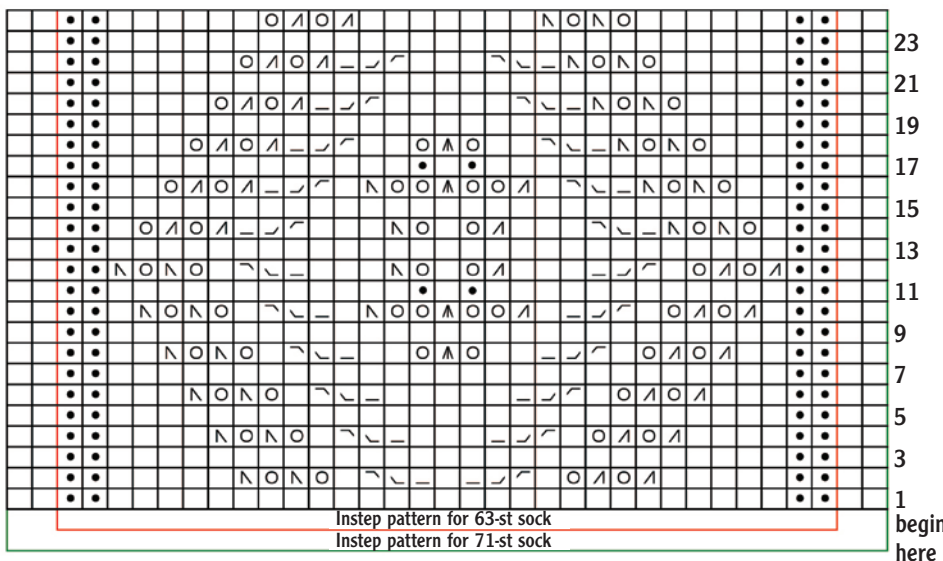
Knitting

I enjoy working the toe-up sock knitting method with two circular needles because I prefer the Turkish cast-on that requires two circular needles. I also find the circular needles to be more purse-friendly for taking best advantage of those unexpected knitting moments. I learned the technique from a friend, who I believe learned from Cat Bordhi's book, *Socks Soar on Two Circular Needles* (Passing Paws, 2001).

Using two circular needles and the Turkish cast-on (see page 96), CO 16 sts or 8 loops. *Note:* With the Turkish cast-on method, you wrap both circular needles at once as many times as you want sts on each needle. For 16 total sts, you have 8 sts on each needle, so you wrap the needles with 8 loops. The wraps are then knitted twice, once on each needle, giving you 8 loops on each needle and 16 sts total.

Round 1: K1, M1R (with left needle tip, lift strand between needles from back to front; knit lifted loop through the front), knit to last st on needle, M1L (with left needle tip, lift strand

Chart A



key

- k
- k, edge stitches for back of leg on 71-st sock only
- p
- o yo
- / ktog
- \ ssk
- ^ slip 2 as if to k2tog, k1, pssso right, k2tog and k first st again
- / \ left, k 2nd st tbl, k 1st st normally

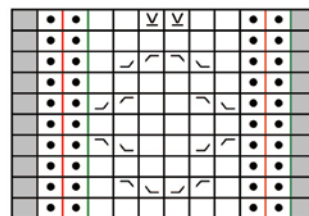


Chart B

begin here



The dyed and dried top looks quite different in its original state than it does after one pass of pre-drafting.

PHOTOS BY KRISTI SCHUELER

between needles from front to back; knit lifted loop through the back), k1; repeat for second needle. Two sts are increased per needle.

Repeat Round 1 until there are 32 (36) sts.

Now repeat Round 1 on every other row (alternate rounds are knitted without increases) until there are 60 (68) sts.

For needle 1 (instep sts), k15 (17), M1R, k to end of needle. For needle 2 (sole/heel sts), follow Round 1 above (63, [71] sts total).

Begin patterning

Follow chart A for all sts on needle 1 and knit all sts on needle 2 until sock reaches beginning of the heel. The heel flap begins directly below the ankle bone or about 2½ inches from the back of the

heel. Be sure to note which row on chart A you knit before beginning heel. I recommend ending after a lace row.

Heel flap

Begin a heel flap under the heel by working the following on needle 2 only.

Row 1: S11 purlwise with yarn behind, knit to end of needle.

Row 2: S11 purlwise with yarn in front, purl to end of needle.

Repeat Rows 1 and 2 until heel flap reaches the back of your heel, ending after Row 2.

Turn heel

Row 1: S11, k17 (19), ssk, k1, turn.

Row 2: S11, p5, p2tog, p1, turn.

Row 3: S11, k to 1 st before gap, ssk across gap, k1, turn.

Row 4: S11, p to 1 st before gap, p2tog across gap, p1, turn.

Repeat Rows 3 and 4 until all sts on needle 2 have been worked, ending after Row 4.

Begin gusset

Slip the first stitch, knit across all remaining sts on needle 2. Still using needle 2, pick up and knit one stitch for each chain stitch along the heel flap. To reduce gaps, pick up one extra stitch at the corners, between instep and gusset.

Knit in pattern across needle 1, starting with the next row in sequence from chart A.

Again using needle 2, pick up and knit one stitch for each chain stitch along the other side of the heel flap, picking up an extra stitch at the corners if you did so



Kristi made her first pair of hand-spun socks from about 3½ ounces of Bluefaced Leicester spun into 350 yards of plied yarn that measures 20 wraps per inch.

Rounds 2 to 6: Knit.
Round 7: *K2tog, yo; rep from * to end of round.
Rounds 8 to 13: Knit.
 Do not bind off.

Finishing

Cut yarn, leaving a tail of 24 to 36 inches. Turn the sock inside out and fold the picot hem down against the wrong side. Thread the tail onto a tapestry needle and tack down the live stitches through the corresponding wrong-side purl bump it lays against. Every few stitches, stretch the top of the sock to retain enough elasticity to allow the sock to stretch over the heel of a foot when putting the sock on. When all the live stitches have been tacked down, weave in the ends and block. Make another sock to match.

I love my first pair of handspun socks! I love the colors and the ombre striping (which attracted a lot of attention when I was knitting in public). Next time, I will try for a finer yarn with three plies so that I can get the tighter gauge that I prefer on socks; then they wear longer, and the design pops more. ☺

When not visiting friends and family in Minnesota, artist and designer KRISTI SCHUELER enjoys knitting, spinning, binding books, and more at the home she shares with her husband, Drew, in Fort Collins, Colorado. You can follow her fiber adventures at <http://blog.designedlykristi.com>.



on the previous side. Your rounds will now begin with needle 2.

Round 1: Knit all sts on needle 2. Knit in pattern on needle 1.

Round 2: K1, ssk, knit to center 32 (36) sts, work the center 32 (36) sts in diamond rib pattern following chart B, knit to last three sts on needle 2, k2tog, k1. Knit in pattern on needle 1.

Repeat rounds 1 and 2 until you have a total of 63 (71) sts on the needles.

Note: So that the diamond rib aligns with the larger diamonds on the front of the sock and a diamond rib pattern repeat is completed when a large diamond is, be sure to start on the row of chart B corresponding to the row on chart A you will be knitting next. Row one of chart B corresponds to Rows 1 and 13 of chart A.

Leg

Continue knitting in the round following charts A and B until the leg is desired length and you have completed a large diamond. The advantage of knitting from the toe up is that you can have the full

pattern repeats no matter the length of the foot. It also allows you to make the most of the yarn you have and you can make the leg any length you desire as long as you have enough yarn. Simply complete a large diamond before you start the picot cuff.

Picot cuff

Round 1: Knit needle 2 sts. On needle 1, k15 (17), m1, knit to end (+1 st) = 64 (72) sts total.

Resources

Fiber

Detta's Spindle, 2592 Geggen-Tina Rd., Maple Plain, MN 55359. (763) 479-1612; (877) 640-1612; dettasspindle@yahoo.com; www.dettasspindle.com

Dyeing

Gleason's Fine Woolies. <http://gfwsheep.com/rov.inst/rov.inst.html>

Porter, Kristi. <http://knitty.com/ISSUEfall02/FEATdyedwool.html>

Turkish cast-on

Fluffy Knitter Deb. <http://fluffyknitterdeb.blogspot.com/2005/10/knitting-made-easier-turkish-cast-on.html>

Stitch patterns

Stanfield, Leslie. *The New Knitting Stitch Library*:

Over 300 Traditional and Innovative Stitch Patterns Illustrated in Color and Explained with Easy-to-Follow Charts. Asheville, North Carolina: Lark Books, 1999, page 116.

Picot edge on toe-up socks

Schueler, Kristi. <http://blog.designedlykristi.com/?p=269>

Key

	k
	k, edge stitches for back of leg on 71 st Sock only
●	p
○	yo
/	ktog
\	ssk
^	sl2 as if to k2tog, k1, pss0
v	sl 1 as it to p, wyib
└	rt, k2tog and k first st again
┘	lt, k 2nd st tbl, k 1st st normally
=	sl1 st onto cn and hold back, k2, k1 from cn
-	sl2 onto cn and hold to front, k1, k2 from cn

	●	●			v	v			●	●	
	●	●							●	●	11
	●	●		└	┘	┘	└		●	●	9
	●	●							●	●	7
	●	●		┘	└		└	┘	●	●	5
	●	●		┘	└	┘	└		●	●	3
	●	●							●	●	1

Leg Rep for 63 st Sock

Leg Rep for 71 st Sock

