

SPINNING YARNS

The tale of a woman, wool, and a spinning wheel



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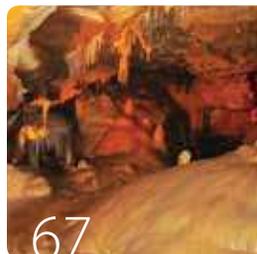
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Now Here's A Colorful Yarn!

What do fibers, fire ants, and festivals have in common?

Baskets sit atop the counter, overflowing with color—reds, yellows, greens, and purples—soft, fluffy fibers just begging to be touched. They belong to Suzanne Correia, but probably not for long. Knitters and spinners love her dyed fibers. Suzanne sells some skeins, but she keeps others for her own projects. She enjoys every step of creating a pair of socks or a beaded shawl and sharing that love of knitting and spinning with others, too.

When Suzanne moved with her husband from Dallas to Austin, she decided to go back to college. At the same time, she began teaching herself to knit. She soon realized that knitting was the perfect activity to accompany her studying. “There’s a rhythm to it,” she says, “and it helps you concentrate.” Though economics and knitting may seem to have little in

common, Suzanne points out that “they both involve numbers and a lot of organization.”

Soon after learning to knit, she discovered the Knitters’ and Crocheters’ Guild of Texas, where she met fellow knitters and got more involved. Along the way, she started designing and selling her



own patterns, as well as demonstrating knitting at the Texas Folklife Festival in San Antonio and the North Texas Irish Festival in Dallas. And the Irish Festival—a celebration of all that is Celtic—is where she really found her knitting niche. She had learned to knit socks, and those Scotsmen in their plaid kilts started asking her to knit kilt hose for them. (Kilt hose look like elaborate knee-high socks.) Intricate works of art, kilt hose are custom-made to the individual’s feet and leg measurements, ensuring a perfect fit—and no worries that they might slip down. Years later, Suzanne is still shipping commissioned kilt hose to Colorado, Florida, and Hawaii and all over the country. Who knew folks in Hawaii wear kilts! Requests also came in for custom socks, especially for people having trouble finding socks large enough. Suzanne’s personally-sized pairs provided the perfect solution. ▶

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COLORFUL YARN *from page 21*

Those commissioned projects became even more customized as Suzanne began dyeing her own fibers. Believe it or not, her first dye was Kool-Aid! But she soon replaced the powdery drink with acid dyes. Suzanne says, "The name may sound nasty, but it's safer than other dyes because you use vinegar as your acid."

In 1992, Suzanne and her husband moved to the Elgin area. They bought a place with some land called Coon Neck Cattle Company. Since there weren't any cattle, just fire ants and lots of Johnson-grass, they renamed it Fire Ant Ranch. After the move, Suzanne expanded her realm of knitting yet again. She signed up for a spinning class and was hooked from the first moment. When Suzanne's teacher encouraged her to bring in some samples of her dyed fibers, they were a hit, and other knitters and spinners began buying them.

Now, what else, you might ask, could she possibly learn about this craft? Suzanne answers, "I don't know what possessed me to get the first sheep, but I think somebody had a shearing or a studio show, and we ended up with a

sheep." After all, she and her husband did have a pasture! A little later, they bought a "spinner's flock"—a mixture of different breeds of sheep. "This was fun and cool," says Suzanne, "but it was a lot of work." So when they moved to Georgetown 15 years later, she sold her flock to someone in Canada.

Georgetown has been their home now for four years. Today, Suzanne has baskets full of wool, mohair, alpaca, soy fibers, and silky silk that she has transformed to bright, beautiful hues. She has three spinning wheels, a loom, and many, many projects in the works. She's still busy with all her commissions, many of her patterns have been published in

magazines, and she sells her custom-dyed fibers and patterns at the Estes Park and Taos Fiber and Arts festivals.

Suzanne is a class coordinator for those same festivals but also loves teaching her own classes near home. She has taught knitting socks or shawls, spinning, spinning with beads, and card weaving. She teaches guilds and any group interested in learning.

She is also compiling some of her knitting patterns into a book. The book idea blossomed as she sat at a cat show—yes, she has award-winning cats, but that's another story for another time. Cat shows feature lots of "waiting around," and as Suzanne took this opportunity to knit, she realized that others were of a like mind. The book, called *The Gumdrop Chronicles* after one of her prize-worthy cats, will feature twelve of Suzanne's patterns—projects that can be done anywhere. The book debuts this spring.

Recently, Suzanne changed her business name from Fire Ant Ranch to Fiber Arts Republic, thinking it was a little more descriptive of what she does. Who knows what yarn Suzanne will choose to spin next? It's sure to be a colorful one! ■

