

Quick to Make

If you're busy and have only limited time to sew, try these quick-to-make ideas.

PACK-FLAT STRAW HAT

by Diana L. Cavagnaro

Fresh out of a suitcase, this pack-flat straw hat looks like a flying saucer, but put it on your head and the accordion pleats that make it flat expand to form a jaunty chapeau. Everybody who sees one wants one. A spicy combination of fun and fashion—you can find these hats in boutiques with pricey tags—you can make your own for under \$10.

Most hats are shaped over blocks (sculptured wooden molds), which establish the contours of the crown and brim. But you don't need any special equipment to make these eccentric little pleated packables. Start with a pari sisal hood (available in a variety of colors by mail from the sources listed on p. 73), tap water, a few household tools, and these simple directions. In 30 minutes you'll have a hat pleated and ready to dry overnight.

Making a pack-flat hat requires only minimal supplies. Clockwise from lower left: aluminum foil, pari sisal straw hood, steam iron, a heavy book, tap water, and a cloth.

Hatmaking 1, 2, 3



1. Using a cloth, wet the sisal hood with tap water until it's thoroughly damp, but not soaking.



2. Start at the crown of the hood and pinch a pleat around the circumference to establish the flat hat top.



3. Continue pinching concentric pleats from the crown to the brim until the entire hood has been flattened. (Equal-size, stacked pleats produce a tube-shaped hat; graduated pleats make one with slanted sides.)



4. Flatten and smooth the pleats by gently pressing them into place with a steam iron.



Millinery experience is definitely not required for making this witty foldaway straw hat.

Hatmaking tips

- Try using foil-covered cardboard templates to shape the pleats—square or triangular templates give the hat an entirely different style.
- Use a steamer or the steam from a teakettle to soften the sisal and help it conform to the shape you want.
- If you don't like the color choices available from the millinery supplier, buy a natural hood and dye it before you make the hat—you can use any regular household fabric dye.



5. Cover the pleated hat with a layer of aluminum foil and weigh it down with heavy books for at least 10 minutes.

6. Remove the weight and let the flat hat remain undisturbed overnight or until it has dried.

7. If you wish, sew elastic or ribbon sized to your head around the inside. Embellish the hat with a tied ribbon or a scarf, or pin on a silk flower; but keep your embellishments removable so your hat can still pack flat.

