



I was making canes and mixing different makes of clay and came up against the stumbling block of what temperature to cure at, given that the Kato recommended heat is 150 degrees centigrade for 10 minutes, and Fimo recommends 110 degrees C and most other clays recommend 130 degrees, for much longer.

Well, doing my research, I discovered that you must have the temperature high enough to ensure that the plasticizers are cured. So logically, if you are cooking kato with other clays, for the first 10 minutes the heat source must be at 150 degrees – and can then be turned down.

Fimo can be cooked at 130 degrees. I have it on good authority (a demonstrator for Fimo) that the temperature of 110 degrees was decided as a result of machine tests in the manufacturer's laboratories, but the technicians insist that it will stand 130 degrees. However, of course, you must ensure that your oven doesn't 'spike' and go much higher.

But what about the length of time for cooking? Well, Donna Kato bakes her pieces over and over and over and maintains the more the baking the stronger will be the clay. Again – as long as you watch the temperature and do not burn your work.

On further investigation I discovered an excellent experiment on the strength of clay after curing. It is on Surfing Cat's blog. <http://surfingcatclay.blogspot.com/2011/05/baking-experiments-part-1.html> (do look at her blog – it has lots of really valuable information). One set of samples were simply taken out of the oven and left to cool, one set plunged into ice cold water when taken out of the oven, and the final batch left in the oven to cool slowly. Those left in the oven to cool slowly were overwhelmingly stronger.

I visited the London Polymer Clay Group over the bank holiday weekend. What a lovely friendly group they are: <http://www.lpcg.co.uk/>. (You will see on their site that Carol Blackburn is about to run a 'ripple effect' workshop which might interest you ) We were all encouraged to take a black and white cane to the meeting and these were incorporated into a zentangle. These were the Kato canes :



(mine is the woven one at the bottom!)



And this is the resulting zentangle:

What a great idea to encourage your friends to make canes and then put them together into this type of wonderful 'doodle'. Now I have to make something out of my slice of the cane. Almost certainly I will use a cutter and make it into a focal bead of some sort.

Talking of cutters (!) those plunger cutters from America have been so very successful that I have bought some new ones.

We now have three large flower cutters:

[http://www.clayaround.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=1&products\\_id=530](http://www.clayaround.com/product_info.php?cPath=1&products_id=530)

Four small flower cutters

[http://www.clayaround.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=1&products\\_id=529](http://www.clayaround.com/product_info.php?cPath=1&products_id=529)

and Four lilac cutters:

[http://www.clayaround.com/product\\_info.php?cPath=1&products\\_id=531](http://www.clayaround.com/product_info.php?cPath=1&products_id=531)

Added to those we have finally managed to get some of the extra disc sets for the Makins extruders

<http://www.clayaround.com/index.php?cPath=1> . These can be used with Makin's stainless steel or their 'Ultimate' extruder as well as with the Walnut Hollow extruder.

And finally – I am asking for a favour from you. Predictably ClayAround can only grow if we market well. We have been in business for only 18 months yet have been able to constantly extend our variety of stock because of our success so far.

I have listed the company on the Free Index site. The only way we can get to the top of the listings is by persuading customers to write brief reviews. If you have bought from us, and feel satisfied with our service, would you consider writing one of those reviews please?

<http://www.freeindex.co.uk/wr.htm?id=242521&br=1> - Thank you in anticipation!

It is a terrible thing to see and have no vision

Helen Keller



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