

Air Hardening Modeling Clay

2 cups baking soda

1 cup cornstarch (cornflour)

1.5 cups cold water (makes about 2 pounds - the recipe can be halved).

Baking soda and cornstarch make a smooth, pliable play clay that can be colored with everyday food coloring - or left white and painted once it hardens. When you have made your model, leave it to air dry - turning every 12 hours or so.

Place ingredients in a pan and stir until smooth. Set the pan over a medium heat and stir until boiling. Stir out any lumps and cook until it is the consistency of mashed potatoes. Turn out onto a plate and cover with a damp, well-wrung kitchen towel - let cool. Dust a work surface with cornstarch and knead until pliable.

Baking Clay

4 cups plain/all-purpose flour

1 cup salt

1 teaspoon powdered alum (optional)

1.5 cups water

Mix ingredients in a bowl. This clay bakes best if the ornaments are not too thick - about 1/2 inch is best. Bake your ornaments on an ungreased baking tray for 30 mins, then turn and bake them for another 90 minutes until they are hard and dry (keep an eye on them so they don't burn). You need a low oven temperature - about 250 degrees F or 120 degrees C. When they are cool you can smooth them with fine sandpaper before decorating and varnishing.