

THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

Countryman's Favour, Harvest Knot, Lover's Token 3-Straw Hair Braid Plait

In days gone by it was the custom for a country lad to take an evening walk with his lass in the fields at harvest time. He would weave for her a buttonhole of plaited straw, and if they were courting, she would wear it over her heart as a token of her love. At the annual hiring fairs at Martinmas, men and women might have worn a simple plait decorated with a wisp of sheep's wool or horse hair, as a badge of their trade, ie shepherd, waggoner, etc.



The Countryman's Favour is a simple but delightful corn dolly and can be made with various plaits. This one is made with a simple 3-straw Hair Braid plait.



For a simple single loop favour. Tie three straws together with a clove hitch just under the heads. Plait until you have about 8 cms of straw left. Bring the three straws up to meet each other, and tie firmly at the end of the plaited section with another clove hitch. Bring this tie down to meet the other tie just under the heads, to form a loop of plaited straw, and tie the two together. Spread the wheat ears out between the wheat stalks and allow to dry flat, preferably under a weight. When dry, you can clip the stalk ends decoratively, and add a ribbon bow or a small sprig of dried flowers.

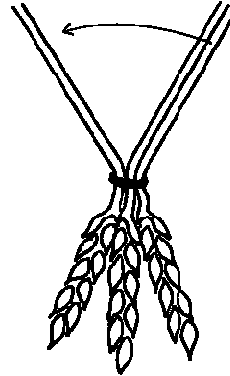
THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

To make a 3-straw Hair Braid Plait

This is an easy and very effective 3-straw plait.

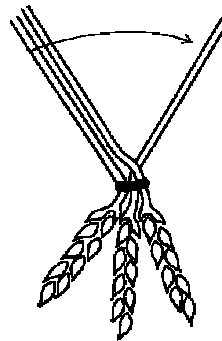
Step 1

Tie 3 straws tightly together under the heads with a clove hitch. Spread out with one straw on the left and two on the right.



Step 2

From the group of two bring the outer straw and lay it on the inside of the straw on the left.



Remaining Steps

Repeat this sequence of bringing the outer straw from the group of two over to the inside of the single straw.

Tip: When folding over the straw make two folds. The first will be up towards you and the second fold will be across to the other side

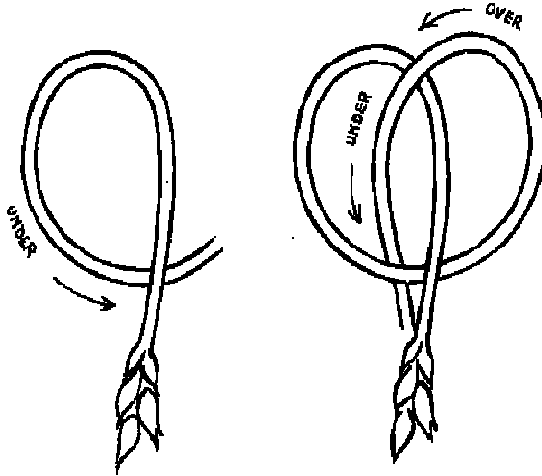
This is what your plait should look like:



When you have completed the required length of plait, bring all three straws up together and tie securely with a clove hitch.

THE GUILD OF STRAW CRAFTSMEN

With a slightly longer length of plait, you can make a simple looped favour. A 2-straw plait, a 3-straw hair braid, or even a Rope Plait is ideal for this. When you have completed and tied off your length of plait, again leaving about 8 cms of straw, you can intertwine the plait into a double knot following this diagram. Then take the end straws round to the back and tie to the wheat ears. Decorate with a ribbon, if you wish.



Colours of ribbons have symbolic meanings:

- WHITE is for purity
- BROWN is for the earth
- GREEN is for the germinating corn
- GOLD is the ripened wheat
- ORANGE is for the glowing sun
- RED is for warmth, and also for the poppy in the corn field
- BLUE is the colour of truth, and also the colour of the cornflower



You can make your favour more elaborate by adding extra loops, mixing plaits – use your imagination and see what you can come up with! These favours also look great on a rush hat.