

Barking a Cossack

Contributor: Kathleen O'Brien

Collector: Marie Marshall

Marie Marshall:

I'm here at Kathleen O'Brien's, at her house and she's gonna give me an outline on how to do bark for cotton duck. Go ahead Kathleen.

Kathleen O'Brien:

You go in the forest, first of all and cut alder trees. You rhine the alder. You put the rhine in a container or box for a few days until it turns brown, and the best season for getting the rhine is summer or early fall before the sap leaves the rhine and goes you know because ah... trees go dormant in the fall.

Marie Marshall:

So would you gather this all the one time for all your Cossacks or just pick so much at a time?

Kathleen O'Brien:

So much at a time, because if you took too many, the one time it would dry out too much, before you get it used. Then you fill up a large boiler with water, throw in about two gallons of rhine from the alders, let it simmer, bring to a boil. Boil the rhine for about approximately two hours then you add two tablespoons of salt, because salt helps the bark to go in the material.

And then you let it simmer and ah... after it's boiling for about ah... simmering and boiling for about six hours when you see the color of the bark going in ... you know through the water. You add ah..., well two tablespoons of baking soda, but do not add the full amount all at once. Just gradually add it until it dissolves. Because you know baking soda fises up and ah... water in the boiler would boil over and of course you'd have a mess. Keep simmering and check your bark, if it's not dark enough you could always add more soda but keep stirring it around as it's boiling through.

When you're bark is completed, you take it off your stove and strain it with cheese cloth or panty hose or some kind of a cloth, all the dust into that then will be strained out. Because if you don't strain it, all the dust from the bark, from the trees will ah... will get in your cotton duck and will make a mess on it. Ah... so then when that's strained off you put it in a bucket or a tub whatever you have and add your cotton duck while your water is hot and keep turning. Keep turning the cotton duck over so as the material won't go spotty and ah.... so do that until until the water starts cooling down and after so

many hours, only leave it in so many hours. If you leave it in all night, the ... all the bark will lodge on the material in different spots and it'll be darker in some spots and then lighter, so to have it all the one thing you keep stirring it over. Then you take it out and you can put it on your clothes line out-a-doors to dry or you can put it in the dryer. I found ah..... the best was to put it in the dryer, when it was drying, it would all dry even.

So then its ready for the make.

Marie Marshall:

So that's that's how you make it.

Kathleen O'Brien:

That's how I make it.

Marie Marshall:

Thank you very much, Kathleen.