

the lively
needle

Mary Kay
Davis

Making felt: She's innocent as a lamb

Spinners know how, weavers know how, but this embroiderer didn't have the foggiest notion. I wanted to make my own felt and couldn't figure how to do it.

Felt is an unwoven fabric produced by beating the devil out of wool until it sticks together. The theory was clear but the how-to was foggy.

The first requirement seemed to be wool. But spun or fresh from the sheep, where would I get it and what would I do with it?

A nice art student gave me a few pointers. I needed unspun wool that had been washed and carded. That eliminated all my stock of needlepoint yarns. Where do you find unspun wool?

I mentioned the dilemma to a friend who brightened up amazingly when she heard my tale of woe. She had a little raw wool in her basement. Would I like a bit? I certainly would.

WE DECIDED THAT I'd pick up a bag from her back porch that afternoon. I wondered why her voice sounded so happy as we hung up.

The answer was clear that afternoon. Instead of two cupfuls of fleece in a sandwich bag, I found a huge container about four feet high and weighing many pounds. Hoping that there wasn't a dead sheep inside, I lugget it home.

After dinner was over and the dishes were done, I opened the bag. Its smell was memorable. There was plenty of wool, complete with hay, straw, dirt and evidence that the flock wasn't constipated. You mean I had to touch that stuff?

IT APPEARED THAT I did. The rest of the evening was spent over the sink washing and scrubbing and washing some more. By 11 p.m., my hands felt like the before half of a hand lotion ad and the box of Tide was empty. I left the remains drying on a counter and fled to bed.

The next morning things were worse than I'd feared. Part of the wool was pure felt, part was fluffy, and you couldn't separate the one from the other. Of all the stiff, wispy, stringy messes that I've ever created, this was the worst.

Daughter No. 2 came down to breakfast at this point, looked at my achievement, and decided that it lacked something. "Why didn't you comb out the junk before you washed it, Mother?" As if any fool would think that.

"You mean I'm supposed to card it first?"

"Of course, Mother. That's what gets the dirt out. Then the washing's easy."

"Why didn't you tell me this last night before I washed my skin away?"

But Mother, you never asked me."

There has to be an easier way to be an artist.

How do fructose, glucose differ?

What is the difference between fructose and glucose? Is fructose better for you?

E.S.

consumer mailbag

Fructose and glucose are both simple sugars. Fructose occurs in most fruits, but not in any other food. Glucose, the predominant sugar in human blood and the sugar that, along with other elements, forms the starch found in wheat, corn, potatoes and rice. Corn syrup is largely glucose. Once inside the body, the two sugars follow different paths which leads to the claims that fructose is better for you. However, the question of fructose being better for you needs further investigation. To date, no long term well-controlled studies have demonstrated the benefits of fructose over glucose.

What are hazardous wastes?

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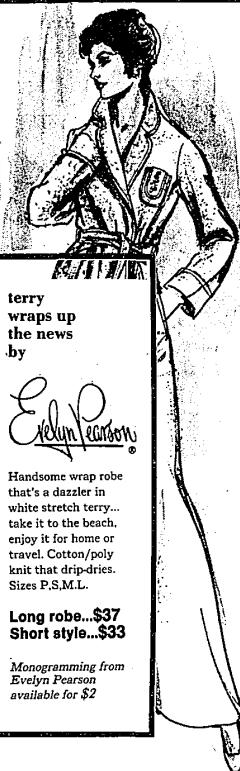
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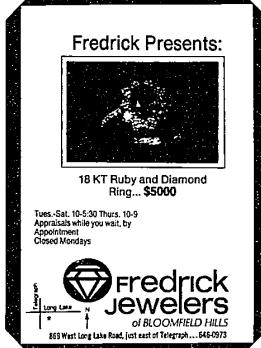
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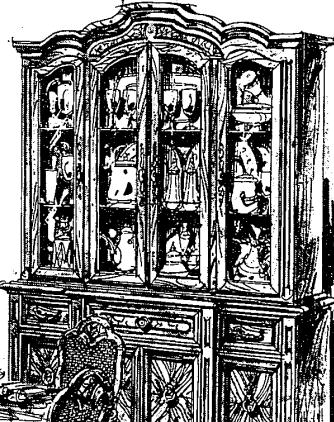
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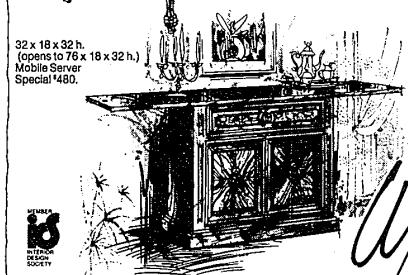
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