

How To Make Milk Carton Candles

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Don't cast away those empty milk cartons — cast candles instead. A popular hobby back in the '50s, crafting candles out of the milk cartons is making a comeback this holiday season as another activity to add to your list of favorite family traditions.

Quart-sized milk cartons or the smaller half and half cartons are perfect molds for easy-to-make holiday candles for several reasons: they are convenient, inexpensive and produce a large candle with four good flat surfaces that lend themselves to many decorating options.

So take a trip to your dairy case and local craft store, get your materials and have an afternoon of family fun. Follow these simple steps to make your very own candle creations.

Milk Carton Candles

What you need: (for one 8-inch candle)

- Milk carton or half and half carton
- About 9 inches of braided wick
- 1-1/2 pounds of wax
- Long wooden kitchen match or piece of straight wire
- Large rubber band
- Sharp knife
- Double boiler
- Tape
- Candle dye, if desired

Prepare the milk carton

1. Clean the empty carton by rinsing with lukewarm water. Dry thoroughly; water and hot wax don't mix.

2. Cut off the top of the carton. To do this neatly, run a piece of tape all the way around the carton, but below the top you are going to remove. You will get a straight line by following the top edge of the tape.

3. To reinforce the sides of the

carton and help prevent a "paunch," place additional strips of adhesive tape in horizontal bands around the middle and bottom portions of the carton.

Melt the wax

4. Cut or break 1-1/2 pounds of wax in small sized chunks and place in the top of the double boiler. Add candle dye if desired. Insert the wick

5. While wax is melting, turn the carton over and make a small hole with the point of a knife in the exact center of the bottom. The hole should be small — only large enough to barely admit wick.

6. Tie a knot near one end of the wick. Thread the wick through the bottom and pull it through until the knot is drawn up tight against the outside carton bottom. (To be sure wax won't flow through, put a small piece of tape over the knot and hole.)

7. Cut notches in the center of opposite sides of the carton top. Rest the wooden match in the slots and drape the wick over it. Then slip rubber band over the carton and over the wick to hold in place. Pour the wax

8. When wax is completely melted, remove from top of double boiler and allow it to cool until it develops a very thin scum on top. (If you pour the wax when it is too hot, the carton will come apart.)

9. To help prevent leaks through the bottom, pour about 1/4-inch of wax in the bottom of the container and let cool somewhat. Then slowly pour the balance of the wax needed into the carton until it reaches about 1/4-inch from the top. Let cool.

10. Puncture the top of candle with a pencil to relieve the vacuum that develops after the thick shell has formed on top of the candle and a depression has formed in the

center. Reheat remainder of wax in double boiler and when wax is hot, fill the candle. (This may have to be done several times until only a small "cup" is left around the base of the wick at the top of the candle.) Stop about 1/8-inch below the original fill line. Let cool 12 to 24 hours.

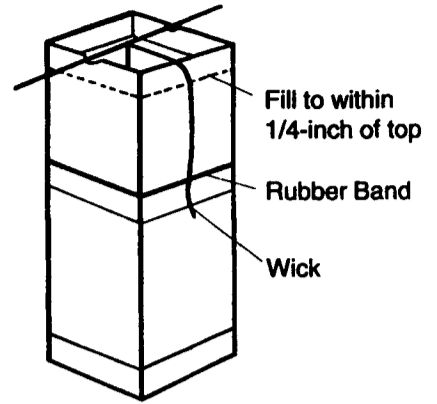
Finish the candle

11. Cut off the knot at the bottom of the candle with a sharp knife. Free the wick from the rubber band and cut it off about 3/4-inch from the top.

12. Carefully peel off the milk carton — and you have a homemade holiday candle!

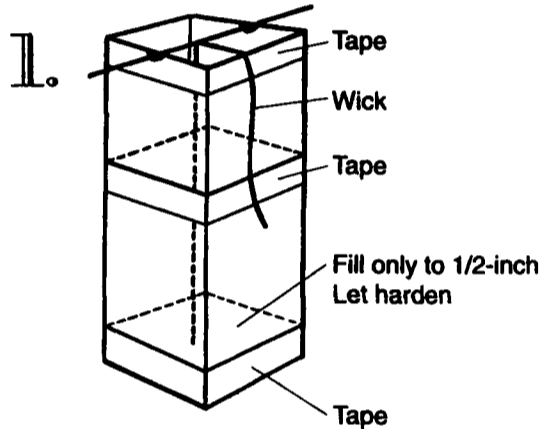
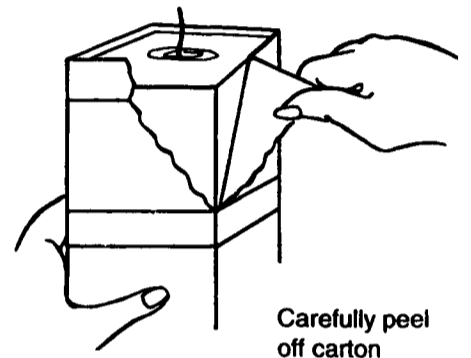
NOTE: Don't handle the finished candle with your bare hands as the oil from your fingers may stay on the candle. Instead, hold the candle by the wick in one hand while the other hand supports the bottom of the candle.

To make it truly a handmade craft, decorate and personalize with festive trimmings. Spray with glitter cement and sprinkle on iridescent crystalines in gold or green. If you're lucky, your candle will look so good you won't want to burn it!



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