

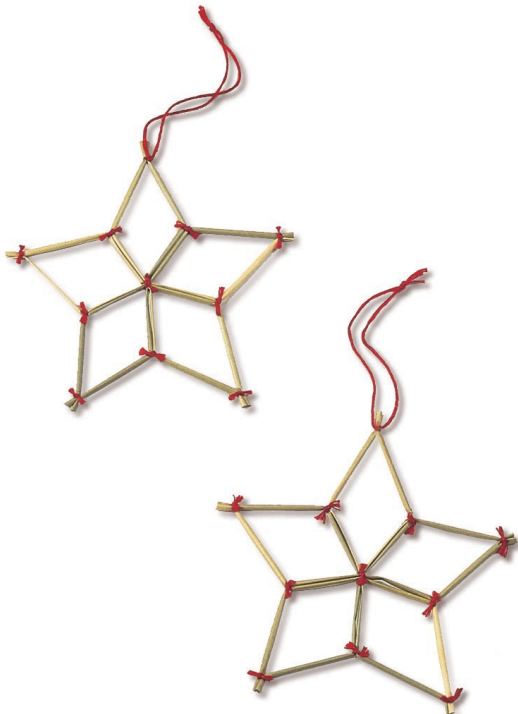


FINLAND

Straw ornaments

In Finland, straw ornaments play an important part in decorating for Christmas.

Hyvää Joulua!

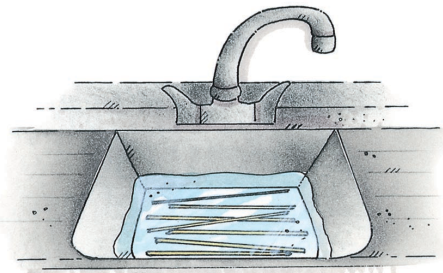


YOU WILL NEED

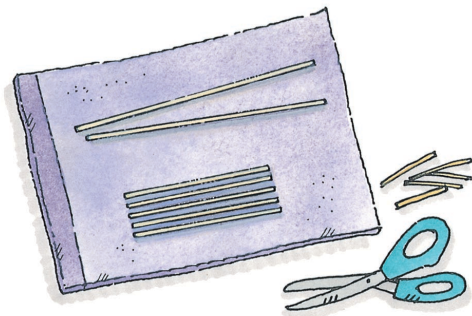
- at least 5 stems of straw (available where dried flowers are sold)
- a towel
- red embroidery floss
- clear nail polish or white craft glue
- a ruler, scissors

1 Cut the head and woody ends off the wheat, and remove any loose bits along the stems.

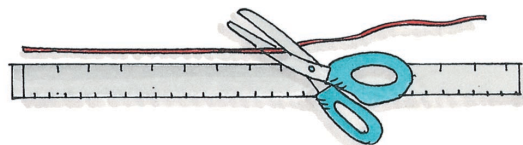
2 Place the stem pieces in a small amount of water in the sink or bathtub. Soak them for a few hours or until you can bend a stem back and forth a few times without breaking it.



3 Remove the stems and place them on the towel. Cut off five 15 cm (6 in.) pieces. Choose pieces that are roughly the same width.



4 Cut eleven pieces of embroidery floss, each 20 cm (8 in.) long. Wet them and squeeze them in the towel so they are damp. Wetting them makes it easier to tie them tightly on the straw.

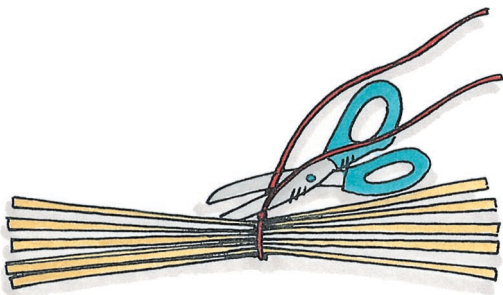


From *Christmas Crafts from Around the World*

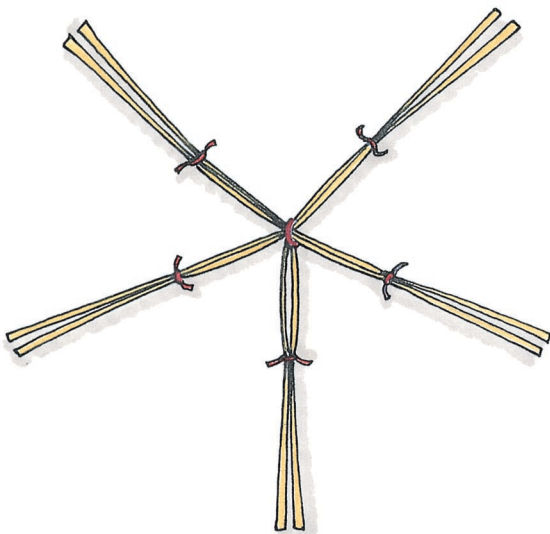
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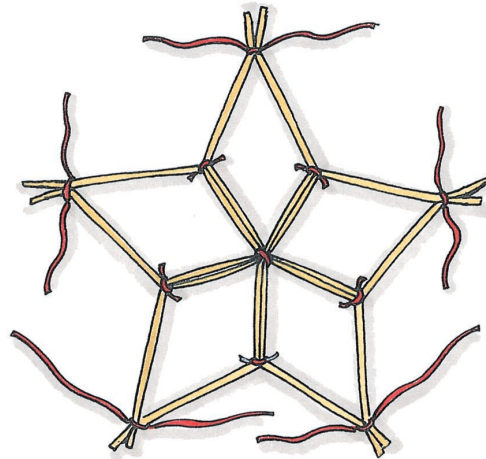
5 Flatten the center area of each piece of straw between your fingers. It is very important that the stems are lined up side by side with the flattened areas together in the center. When you have them arranged correctly, hold them on each side of the center and ask someone to tie them together with a cut piece of floss. Knot the floss tightly and trim the ends.



6 Knot the stems together in pairs about 2.5 cm (1 in.) from the center. Tie them tightly so that the pieces in each pair spread a little apart. Trim all the tying threads.



7 Knot a piece of straw from one pair to a piece of straw from the pair beside it, about 3 cm (1 1/4 in.) from the other row of knots. As you knot your way around the ornament, bend the straws so that the star takes shape. You may find it easier if you hold the stems and have someone else tie the knots for you.



8 Trim four of the pairs of threads. Tie together the ends of the leftover threads to make a loop so you can hang up your new straw ornament. Dab a bit of nail polish or glue on all the knots. Trim off the straw ends.

