

Cast On Here

December 2006



It's crunch time! For those of you who have been busy knitting for the holidays for months, good for you! We're sure, however, that there are plenty more of you just realizing how late it is in the season and wondering if there's time to squeeze in a quick knit for a last-minute gift.

If you're one of those knitters, perhaps this issue of **Cast On Here** will ease your burden.

This December, we have all kinds of good news; first, we're welcoming a new Garter Belt member, Rebecca Hatcher, whose patterns have graced the pages of Knitty for many seasons. She'll bring a new dimension to our team and we're so excited to have her.

Not only that, but with this newsletter, we'll bring you four quick patterns you can knit for loved ones for a gift, or for a nifty item to keep them warm during the winter season. Wherever you live, or wherever they live, there will be something here to brighten up the windy, snowy, or rainy days. Not to mention, if your loved one lives in a place that is a bit warmer this time of year, send them your version of one of our knitted scarves or caps and tell them how cool they'll look wearing the item along with a tank or tee.

Also on page 2, find links to all recent releases since our last newsletter.

Happy Knitting!

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MEET OUR NEW MEMBER!

Rebecca writes:
I have the same “how I learned to knit” story as many people: my grandma taught me during a visit when I was in second or third grade. My grandma took a nap every afternoon, and my knitting lesson started a little too close to her nap, because I hadn’t quite caught on when she went to lie down. By the time she woke up, I’d figured it out for myself... except that I didn’t (and still don’t) hold the needles or manipulate the yarn like anyone else I’ve ever met.



Rebecca Hatcher

I took up knitting again in college, but always followed patterns until I finally met another knitter who’d never followed a pattern. She must have swatched, because her sweaters fit, but it seemed to me that she just grabbed some yarn and needles and cast on. For the body. In the round. I made a sweater her way (I swatched) and I was hooked.

I think I would have kept knitting my own designs for just myself, except that I used to live near a small hand-dyed yarn company and I started test knitting for them. I corrected errors in a couple of patterns, then started writing new patterns for the yarn. It was a stretch—I’m a fan of muted, earthy colors, and the woman who creates the colorways favors vibrant, contrasting colors—but they pay me generously in yarn, and.... you know, free yarn! And from there, I branched out to Knitty, and two of Amy Singer’s books.

I like to knit and design sweaters that I can wear to work as well as in real life—fortunately, my work is on the casual/arty end of business casual, and sometimes my coworkers work with glue, so I can wear just about any sweater. Lately, I’ve started knitting lace and I’m in the midst of a sock phase. I tend towards natural colors and fibers and relatively simple shapes with quirky details. I try to use the qualities of different stitches in unexpected ways. My new year’s resolution is to (finally) start a real blog—imaginary blogging is getting a little old.

THE JOY OF SCARVES (AND A HAT)

Here are four quick patterns for you to enjoy during the cold months ahead!



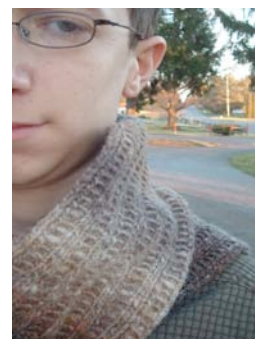
Habit Forming
Elizabeth brings us a simple slip stitch texture, modeled by Franklin Habit!



Natty Scarf & Hat
Wendy B. offers reversible cables on a basic hat and scarf combo.



School Picture
Make the most of a luxury yarn with Rebecca’s feather and fan scarf.



Slacker Scarf
Marie’s simple slip stitch is a bit different from Elizabeth’s. Try them both!

RECENT RELEASES

Since our last Newsletter in August we've released four new kids' patterns. Check 'em out!



Darling

Another top down pattern but with a twist: This one has delightful embroidery so the little coat will be perfectly adorned with lovely stitches.



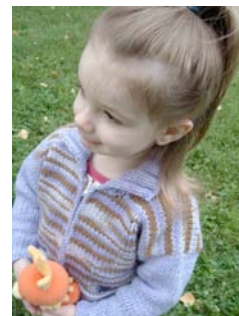
Drive-Thru

This classic round yoke pullover or cardigan is worked up with a worsted yarn and has a simple stripe-y pattern on the yoke that looks like Fair Isle, but isn't. Only simple and quick stuff here!



Foothills

A boy's top-down raglan with a fun and easy stitch pattern the boy on your list will love.



Smitten

A neat little jacket with front zipper, ribbed collar, and pockets for special finds. Perfect for any boy or girl you love to knit for.

WHAT'S NEXT

We are all looking forward to see what Rebecca has in store, so be sure to stay in touch for her newest patterns.

Other new offerings on the horizon are Kelebek, a moderately challenging Fair Isle vest from Elizabeth, in six sizes from 32-59 inches. Kelebek uses Shetland-style fingering weight wools in 9 colors.

Wendy B. just released another free pattern, one of those slouchy caps you've seen on the runways. Although this isn't a wearable

for all, you can adjust the amount of "slouch" by reducing or increasing the number of inches you work on the crown. This is a free pattern and you can find it on www.knitandtonic.typepad.com.

Marie is working on the Red Cables cardigan, recently previewed on her blog, and a Snowy Winter wool pullover with a matching hat (both patterns in kids sizes 2-12).

Thanks for all your support in 2006!

We look forward to sharing our knitting news and patterns with you in 2007!

CONTEMPLATING THE SIMPLE SCARF

By Marie Grace Smith

Scarves can be very simple yet they offer so many possibilities. Now, I know that the first thing that comes to mind this time of year when the word scarf is mentioned is last-minute-gift-giving but lets take a look at the faithful scarf from a different point of view.

There are a million Simple Scarf patterns out there and for good reason. They are easy enough to knit for new knitters and still offer enough variety to keep more experienced knitters busy. They can be functional, whimsical, classy, or just plain fun.

A scarf is the perfect way to give a new yarn a try. I like to pick up a hank or two or three of something that catches my eye. Maybe its a pretty hand-dyed with a great mix of colors or maybe a high end luxury yarn. Just enough to make a scarf won't break the bank and will give you the chance to make something more substantial than a swatch.

A scarf is also a great way to tinker with all the stitches in those stitch guides you have piling up on the bookshelves. The stitch I used for the Slacker Scarf is from Barbara Walker's First Treasury but I gotta tell ya just looking at the picture of it in the book, it isn't all that impressive. Knitting it up with some Noro, however, resulted in a pattern I really like and plan to use again.

Most of the time Simple Scarves are easy to customize. Let's use the Slacker Scarf as an example again. I picked a yarn color and a stitch I thought would be appropriate for

the guys because we neglect them so often in our knitting. Most of the guys I know don't want a particularly big scarf. They want enough to get the job done and that's it, therefore, the finished dimensions of this scarf are fine. I prefer ridiculously long scarves and scarves that are so wide they are more like a wrap than a scarf. Length is easy to adjust, just keep knitting in pattern with a 3rd skein (and a 4th if you want).

Width is easy to adjust if you know the stitch count required for the pattern you are working, in this case a multiple of 4 plus 2 more stitches. The pattern calls for 7 full repeats (28 stitches) plus 2 more (total of 30 stitches). Maybe I want a wider scarf so I cast on 58 stitches (56 plus 2). I will still work the pattern as it is written in the instructions but I will have worked more full repeats (14 instead of 7) by the time I get to the end of the row. The wider version of the Slacker Scarf I have started is Noro Silk Garden rather than Kreyon. Silk Garden has a smaller stitch gauge so I made sure I cast on plenty of stitches to get a width I would be happy with. I'll also need more than 2 or 3 skeins to get a good length.

Try to look at a Simple Scarf pattern as an outline for you to use. Make it longer or wider depending on your taste. Substitute a yarn you have in your stash or splurge on that alpaca you've been eyeing. Get a little adventurous and try your very own scarf idea, maybe a self-striping yarn in a rib pattern or super fine alpaca in ripple or lace pattern. The point is to enjoy your knitting and knit with yarn you love.

STAYING SANE WITH HOLIDAY KNITTING

By Elizabeth Morrison

This time of year we see a lot of articles, and even some books, about “holiday knitting,” which invariably focus on things to knit as gifts for others. I like my knitting to be more about stress reduction, than stress creation, so my focus is on planning your knitting to help you hold it together during December Madness. In the last couple years we’ve been hearing a lot about the meditative benefits of knitting. It’s true! Knitting can be the glue that holds your sanity together when you’ve had a bit too much family time for one month. Let’s face facts: whether you love them dearly or feel a little less than positive about them, spending day after day in close quarters with extended family can stress anyone. Knitting is a great way to retain your equilibrium when you’ve had too much togetherness.

Waiting for My Grandmother...

Time spent with my extended family has always involved a certain amount of “hurry up and wait.” If my grandparents announced that we were to “pop in” at Cousin Ann’s for drinks at 5:00, the rest of us would be dressed and ready at the appointed time. 5:15 and then 5:30 would come and go. At 5:45, my grandmother would still be running around in a panic, possibly made worse by the fact that the rest of us were sitting idle while she was still getting ready. This idle time used to make me crazy. But once I discovered the magic of knitting, I was fine. I could pull out my project and work until the rest of the family was ready, then off we’d go to drinks at Cousin Ann’s. It almost goes without saying that certain kinds of knitting are better suited to this situation than others. One needs a project that is easy to stop and start on a moment’s notice. When Grandmother finally makes her appearance, fretting because we are so late, it doesn’t do to request time to finish the row. Plain stockinette stitch in the round is a good choice for this. Whenever waiting can be anticipated, be sure you have a mindless stop and go project. It could save you thousands of dollars of therapy or maybe even legal bills.

Traveling

Traveling Knitting is a lot like Waiting Knitting. Of course, the length of the travel time and mode of transport affect your choices. Flying, with airport times, layovers, changes in aircraft, and so on, means bringing a suitable Waiting Knitting project. Keep it a manageable size: you don’t want to haul a duffel bag of yarn with your floor length coat-in-progress through the terminal to change gates. Socks are a good choice, because they are worked on small needles at small gauges. It takes a bit of knitting to finish one, but it takes barely any space in your bag. Driving can be another story. If you have the luxury of being the passenger on a long car trip, the world is your oyster. Bring that afghan! Make that Kaffe Fassett intarsia sweater you’ve always dreamed of. Take over the back seat and settle in for a marathon.

Staying home

Staying home with all your knitting means you can pick and choose your projects as the situation allows. Whether it’s socializing with guests in the family room after a nice meal, and working on a mindless scarf while chatting, or retreating for a “nap” (wink, wink) and digging into the hard stuff, your supplies are all there. But what if your relatives demand more interaction from you? Do what my mom did one year: lay in extra knitting supplies and teach all who care to learn how to knit. You might guarantee yourself years of blissful holidays to come, as you and your loved ones make the rounds of the local yarn shops, then settle in for a little S’n’B quality time while the winter storms blow.

We knitters are fortunate that our craft is so portable and versatile. Imagine if your calling was sculpting in granite? Try explaining that to the TSA folks at the airport. Your knitting can go where you go and give you that perfect way to focus your hands and brain so that life’s little annoyances just float on past, instead of taking root and consuming you.

Happy December everyone!