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# A Fine Fleece: Knitting With Handspun Yarns



## Synopsis

The pleasure of knitting can be that much greater when you know you're using the perfect yarn. In *A Fine Fleece*, designer, knitter, and spinner Lisa Lloyd explores the different qualities of handspun yarn and presents projects that show them to their best advantage. There is valuable information here for every knitter, even if you've never considered learning to spin (though you may find inspiration in this book to do just that). While educating you on the differences in fibers (like Alpaca, Merino, Cormo, Rambouillet, and Suffolk) and the characteristics you can achieve in a handspun yarn by combining fibers according to certain recipes, Lisa Lloyd also shares the three important concepts that enlighten her designs: the use of contrasting color and fiber; scale and perspective (chunky yarns with chunky cable stitches versus chunky yarns with delicate ones); and the creation of "poetic" sweaters that try to capture an emotion. Each of the 26 projects in *A Fine Fleece* shows the finished project knitted in both a handspun yarn and a commercial yarn so that you can train your eye to understand how fiber and texture can truly transform a piece.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 160 pages

Publisher: Potter Craft (April 8, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0307346838

ISBN-13: 978-0307346834

Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 0.6 x 11.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 2 pounds

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 44 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,211,397 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #64 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Needlecrafts & Textile Crafts > Spinning #428 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Needlecrafts & Textile Crafts > Weaving #2224 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Crafts & Hobbies > Needlecrafts & Textile Crafts > Knitting

## Customer Reviews

It is clear that Lloyd is conducting a love affair with Aran designs (those wonderfully cabled knits from Ireland) as well as with the concept of blending the best of classic design with contemporary sensibilities. What does that mean? It means a judicious use of cables and twists with

body-skimming shapes. Moreover, she figures out how to fashion each of the 26 patterns in hand-spun and in commercial yarns, presented beautifully in photographs and detailed instructions. For those unfamiliar with sheep breeds and "outputs," there is a primer on hand spinning, selecting appropriate yarns, and other topics. The patterns present skill level (with clear definitions), measurements, gauge, materials, step-by-step how-tos, and, of course, photographs and graphs, whenever appropriate. Dream of these names: Espresso, Le Smoking, October Frost, Gaelic Mist -- then begin stocking, er, stitching up. --Barbara Jacobs

Lisa Lloyd specializes in traditional knitting and classic looks. She custom-designs yarns, and her knitting patterns have been published by Harrisville Designs, Interweave Knits magazine, and Wild Fibers magazine. Visit her online at [www.afinefleece.com](http://www.afinefleece.com).

This book might be geared towards spinners who are looking for beyond-the-basics use for his or her handspun (and provides tons of great information for those that do), but even if you've never spun a foot of yarn in your life, you can get something out of this book. The patterns included are \*fabulous\*. Beyond fabulous. They're rich and intricate and have a nice mix between smaller things and to-die-for sweaters. The photography is amazing and inspiring, and for a closer look at each garment, there are diagrams and stitch charts provided for every wearable. (One of the previous reviewers commented that the photos weren't clear -- not all of them, no. But the charts make up for that, plus some. And the photos are inspirational, so it's all good with me.) Each pattern gives you not just the required amount/wpi of the handspun yarn needed, but also gives a commercially-spun equivalent AND shows the knitted item in BOTH variations (hand/commercially-spun), so you can see how the handspun aspect changes the nature of the fabric (if it does)...it's an amazing extra that the author gives us. Speaking of extras -- the sizing on these patterns ROCK. Being one of the Large Chest Brigade, it's often hard to find books that go beyond the 32 - 34 - 38 sizing for miniature people and get into the sizes more realistic for my...uh...front additions. Not a problem here. I think the smallest size I've seen has been 48", and that RULES. I loved the author just a little bit more than I did before after noticing that little (big?) detail. I've been paring down my Stuff lately. Getting rid of a lot of the extraneous possessions I've been hoarding. Knitting books are included in that. And I can say, without even a hint of hesitation, that this book would be one of the five I'd keep, no matter what. It's got EVERYTHING I look for in a knitting book, plus one. I'm so glad I picked it up, and I can't wait to start knitting a wardrobe-full of handspun, handknit sweaters just for me.

If it hadn't been for all of the gorgeous sweaters I had seen on Ravelry, I doubt I'd have bought this book. One thing I expect in a knitting book is good photographs of the projects. Sadly the photos are mostly artsy-fartsy fashion shots: poorly-lit, partly out of focus, poses obscuring the garments, or just plain not showing what I wanted to see. I want to know how the garment looks all around - front and back! Fortunately I did not pay full price, and I can see why the price was marked down. If the photos had been better, I'd have rated the book higher.

This is well written, learned a great deal about yarns, but I bought it for the sweaters which are creative Aran Isle/Cabled/casual, not for beginners. An intermediate knitter with patience and pluck could give this a shot. The sweaters are really nice and there are three or four that I want to make, sigh, some day. Love this book.

I would have liked to give Lisa Lloyd's writing five stars and the photography two stars or perhaps just one. The text is well-written -- a pleasure to read, and informative; and the projects are classic -- many cabled sweaters, a bit of lace. The information provided for spinners is both inspiring and useful; although I would have liked more details about the fiber preparation and spinning techniques used for each project. The photographs, however, which should clearly illustrate the stitches and techniques, are in such soft focus that they are almost useless for that purpose. In some instances, the entire project is fuzzy because the photographer has focused on a prop instead of the sweater. Are the photos pretty? Yes, very pretty. Are they helpful? Absolutely not. I checked the photographer's Web site and found that she is known for photos with a shallow depth of field. I think the book designer or publisher should have looked into this before selecting her. The designer made another choice that reduces the value of the book to spinners -- the primary customer base. There are no photos of the handspun yarn used in each project. The reader must deduce what the yarn is like from the brief description. Am I still happy that I purchased the book? Yes. But it would have been so much better had the designer or publisher made different choices.

4.5 stars The supposed point of this book is to provide a library of patterns appropriate for handspun yarn. The author has photographs of each pattern knit in at least two yarns, one handspun and one factory-made. The subtitle is "knitting with handspun yarns." I guess there are so many knitting books on the market, everyone needs some kind of unique hook. I thought this part of the book was a bit silly. However, the patterns are almost universally interesting and knittable. Many of the patterns are cabled, so if you're a fan of Aran knitting you'll enjoy this book. In fact, this is the

best book of Aran / cabled style knits I've seen in a good while. The book is a pleasure to flip through and has great patterns. If the handspun angle interests you, all the better, but the book is great based solely on the great cabled patterns. I've only knit sock patterns so far, but they were easy enough to follow for someone familiar with knitting patterns. If you haven't knit before, this isn't a great book to start with.

Has some really good patterns - at first glance, you don't realize what a nice book it is - you think it is one of those "light" ones about spinning. As you look through it, you see there are several really nice patterns. particularly arans.

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