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## **Stitched Rope Basket** with Nicole Blum

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### **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

#### Overview

- We're making these rope bowls and what drew me to this project was it's beautiful form and the tactile experience you have when you're sewing rope like this. It's cotton. It has nice weight to it. We're gonna start this project by sewing a base. We're going to stitch about a six inch round starting with about a hundred feet of rope. Then we're going to stitch up the sides and it's going to be a form and it's an experience similar to throwing a pot. You have to sort of bend and push the rope a little bit so it starts to create a shape. Then at the end, we're going to create a handle. The last little bit of rope is going to be cut and made into a little tassel stitched with a little hand stitching and then you'll be done and you'll have this beautiful modern take on a traditional basket.

### **Chapter 2 - Materials**

#### Materials

- To make a rope bowl, you don't need very many supplies. You need rope. I have a hundred feet of rope here. It's a quarter inch ply rope but you can also use a quarter inch braided rope. I don't really like to go much bigger than a quarter inch. My machine seems to fit that comfortably under the foot as will most machines. You're going to need a full bobbin of your colored contrasting thread and a nice new spool of thread and a full bobbin and spool of the natural colored thread that is going to blend in with the rope, a pair of scissors for snipping, a needle and thread for doing the finishing little tassel at the end, and a sewing machine that's in good working order. We'll use a zigzag stitch so make sure your machine has one. That's it. Let's get sewing.

### **Chapter 3 - Make Basket**

#### Stitch basket

- To start your bowl, you're gonna take the end of the rope, bend the first inch over to create a bend, like that, and you're going to be stitching that first little bit. Insert this bend that's going off to the left under your foot, and you need to make sure that the bend is going that way so you can build the bowl on the outside of the machine. Otherwise, all that round part of the bowl is gonna be built in here and you're gonna be really limited by this space. So your foot in the normal up position is just like that, but there is more to it. You can keep going. So lift the foot all the way up, drop it down, and then make sure you engage your tension, so that foot's all the way down, even though it it hasn't move, 'cause it can't. It's stopped by the rope. Then begin to do your zig zag stitch. (sewing machine whirring) And backstitch. (sewing machine whirring) And now you're ready to go. So you're going to be stitching forward. When you get to the end there, stop and lower your needle into the rope, lift your foot, twist it... Around. Put your foot down all the way and you gotta make sure it's down all the way or it's gonna have all these really loose threads in the back and it's gonna get tangled. And start stitching, again. (sewing machine whirring) After you've made one round, just snip off the tail ends. If you're having a hard time making these first couple of turns, which can be awkward, and you're worried about getting your fingers stuck under the mechanism, which would really hurt, you can use your scissors or some other sharp tool to act as your finger. So start stitching. (sewing machine whirring) And make your turn... (sewing machine whirring) Because these first couple turns are a little tricky, so just be slow. (sewing machine whirring) And just

remember that this center of the foot, between the two toes, is going to be over this valley that's created where these two ropes meet. And you want them to be really smushed up against each other. That way, it grabs both. (sewing machine whirring) Then it starts getting really easy. And you get a nice rhythm. (sewing machine whirring) You see how my finger is right up here, right under the foot? I'm holding that rope and pushing it up against this flat piece that's being formed. (sewing machine whirring) Sort of a guide. (sewing machine whirring) Go as fast as you're comfortable with going. (sewing machine whirring) Okay, so we're doing the base here. We're gonna make this flat part about between six and seven inches wide and it's gonna be, you know, the part of the bowl that sits on the table nice and flat and then from there, we're gonna start building up the sides. And now's a good time to also just check your rope and make sure it's not getting in any tangles and that you have really been successful at sewing both sides of the valley, so both ropes together, and make any adjustments that you think you need to make. If you have made mistakes and they haven't come together, just continue, you can always come back and, you know, make some hand stitches in those places. (sewing machine whirring) All right. We've made about a six or seven inch base. It's nice and flat. From here is the fun part 'cause you really get to decide how the shape is gonna go and you're gonna hold it and cradle it and gently form it into a bowl and it's really kinda magical. So I'm going to start just by pushing the center in a little bit and creating just a slight concave in this already flat part. And then I'm gonna start stitching. And what's gonna happen is this rope that's being fed in is going to just come up a little bit on the edge of that and it's going to be able to start forming that shape. So here we go. (sewing machine whirring) You can see I'm tipping this upwards, now. (sewing machine whirring) Gently, not super, not super upright, but just a little bit. (sewing machine whirring) It's really sort of like a meditation. You have to pay attention, because you wanna make sure that the needle is catching both sides, so you're really looking at the foot the whole time, but you don't have to really think about anything. So it's very, it's a very gentle and nice project to do if you're feeling tired. (sewing machine whirring) All right. We're getting to the end of this part where I'm going to be just using the blue and I'm gonna switch the threads in a minute to the natural. (sewing machine whirring) Okay, I think this is where I wanna stop using the blue and it's completely your decision. It's a design choice. You can make the whole thing one color or you can do stripes. It's up to you. But this is where I'm gonna stop. I'm gonna take this off and lift the foot up, take the bowl out... Snip my threads, change the bobbin. It's nice to have it all ready to go. Change my top thread to natural. Snip your threads to keep them out of your way when you change colors. We are ready to move on forming our bowl. So we're going to put this back under the foot, but we're going to sink the needle in about one inch back from where you had previous stitching so it's gonna lock, you know, lock that in. Lift that foot super high up. Position it so the zig zag's gonna catch both sides. Sink your needle in and begin stitching. And you're going to make sure that that foot is all the way down. Don't forget, 'cause it will ruin what you've already done. (sewing machine whirring) Okay, now that I've started with the new thread color, I wanna also start changing the contour of this bowl. So I'm going to make this part start to curve in. This is now the widest part of my bowl and I want it to start to tighten up a little bit. So what I'm going to do is I'm gonna stick my hand under the bowl all the way and really push up. It's really just resting on my hand, but before, it was kind of flopped open and now I'm gonna angle it upright. And then just stitch, as you have been all along. (sewing machine whirring) Gets a little tangly, sometimes. (sewing machine whirring) Okay. I think I like my bowl like this. I really love the shape right now and I like how the blue color's here and the natural's here and just the contour's really appealing to me and I still think I'm gonna use the rest of the rope, I'm just gonna leave it and call it a day, just make

some handles.

Add handles and finish

- What I'm gonna do now is I'm going to create little handles, and it's very simple. You don't have to cut the rope or anything. Backstitch, forward, stop with your needle, and the loose rope. From here we're gonna stitch right along this length only, so I'm just gonna shift my direction, I'm gonna make it so I don't catch this. This is gonna be out of the way. Alright, I'm gonna just go, ah, like three inches. Then lift your foot up, pull out your length. This right here needs to be open a little bit, like that. So I'm gonna cut the threads, get them ready. I'm gonna hold this in position, 'cause I want it to be up a little bit. I don't want it to be down flat. I'm going to insert it back under, so you're gonna wanna put that in the way up position, make sure that it's how you want it to be as far as like this bend right here, put your foot all the way down, and begin stitching. About half inch, and then go back, back tack, and then go forward again until you get to the other side of bowl. You can mark it with a pencil if you need to. When you get to the place where you wanna create another handle, just stop and backstitch about a half inch, move forward again, and then like before, you're just gonna stitch along the piece that's gonna be the handle, not attaching it to the rest of the bowl. So just angle out your bowl, remove the bowl from, so lift your foot, remove the bowl, okay, pull it out, try to match it up to the other side, pinch it where you want it to be, that looks good, slide it back under, lift your foot all the way up, get it in position, make sure that's loose, foot down all the way, and you're gonna stitch a half inch backstitch, then I'm gonna stitch halfway between the two handles, and then I'm gonna stop. We're gonna finish our bowl. Alright, so we're gonna take the bowl off, ooh, make sure the needle's up, and break it. Take the bowl off, snip your threads. Okay, I'll just snip some loose threads here. Alright so this is where we're gonna make our tassel, right here. I'm gonna cut it a little longer than I want it 'cause I'm gonna make a knot, 'cause remember this stuff frays a little. Might want some bigger scissors, there we go. Gonna make a knot, get it all through, pull all the, this is gonna make that cute little tassel. Pull your knot down, some of those didn't get in, we can just snip 'em off, which I'll do now. So we're gonna attach this little tassel to the side of the bowl. It's gonna be a nice little design feature. And all we need to do that is a needle and thread, and I've threaded it with the contrasting thread, this blue thread. Start from the inside of the bowl, right where the bowl meets the tassel. You're gonna insert your needle through, and it's gonna slide really easily through, and it's gonna come out right through this, down this drop part of the rope. Pull it so there's a few inches of tail, thread tail in there, and leave it, and then going over this part of the ply, send the needle back through. Now we can tie that off, we can create a little knot right here with these two ends, and that'll secure it. One. Two. That in. So we're gonna be stitching from the inside out and back again to the inside, and it serves two purposes. You're stitching the little tassel down, holding it against the bowl, but you're also creating little decorative element. So come out, go back in, we're going all the way through to the inside of the bowl. Gonna do one more right here, around that twist, through to the inside of the bowl. I'm gonna work down to the next one. Okay, a few more decorative stitches just on the outside of this knot. I'm not going to be going to the inside of the bowl on this one. It just adds a little extra color. There's something lovely about hand-stitching so I try to do it whenever I can. You can make this any way you want, there's no rule. One more stitch, and I'm gonna go all the way through to the inside of the bowl. There we go. Then I'm gonna tie off just by looping it on the inside here. Three times. Could tie it to that other tail. And we are done. Snip off the tails. Alright, now that is all done. The last thing I wanna do is just check to see if there are any places where the two ropes didn't come together and

it's gonna happen sometimes, so kind of look at it, see if there are any gaps. Alright, this one looks good, doesn't look like I have any gaps, but often I do, and so all I do is come back with the natural color thread and a needle, and just sort of stitch it up by hand on the inside, and it hides that. So don't worry, it's very forgiving. There you go. I love this project. I love how organic the shape is. I love how they're just slightly different every time, and that I get to decide what the shape's gonna be. It feels really good in your hands, and it's gonna be super useful. That's pretty, I love it.