

# More Oyster Shell Ornaments

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Once I got started with the oyster shell ornaments (see my post from April 28th), I found myself quite taken with them and couldn't seem to stop! Here are some more, plus a few additional things I've learned since my previous post.

I love nautical images and seashore themes to complement the shells, and especially like these sailing ships. The ship at right is a fussy-cut motif; I coated the interior of the shell with pearlescent paint first, to give a mother-of-pearl effect.



The sailing ship and map above are taken from the last bits of the fantasy map paper that I used on several previous shells. I really like the dreamy quality of this ornament.



Mermaids are another perfect choice for a sea-related shell ornament.



I love this image of the lobster pot tree, since it combines Christmas and coastal themes. I added a lobster to the top of the tree to complete the effect. I've made 3, and I know my east-coast friends will love them.



Although they are seashore themed, I was a little disappointed in these line drawing ornaments. The blue wash I added over the image helps, but it turns out I prefer a bit of shading and fill, so I probably won't make any



others with line-drawn artwork like these. They're nice in their way, but not quite my cup of tea.

Here are some additional things I've learned.

1. Although the shells are hard, they are quite brittle, and will potentially shatter if dropped. If stored together in a box, they may also suffer damage from jostling against each other. I advise wrapping the finished ornaments in bubble wrap.
2. The brittleness also makes them prone to splintering when drilled, so if you're drilling holes in the shells for hanging, **DO THAT FIRST**, before you begin decoupage. I accidentally decoupage an undrilled shell, which unfortunately shattered when I tried drilling after the fact. Drilling it first won't prevent the shatter, but at least you won't lose your painstaking work.
3. On the bright side, if a piece should splinter off when you're drilling, you can sometimes glue it back in place using 3-in-1 glue or even tacky glue. Just let it dry before proceeding.

4. I recently discovered a product called Sax Tempera Gloss Varnish, and it's great!! It gives a really smooth finish with no brush marks, won't smear your images, and dries really quickly. It's about \$35 CDN per quart, but it's worth it. For use on ornaments, I like it much better than Varathane.



5. On the first ornaments I made, I painted the backs a solid gold (the first image, at left, below). It's nice, but I find that I prefer having more of the texture of the shell show through, as it does on the middle samples. For a natural look, depending on the image I'm using and the look of the shell itself, I sometimes



even leave the back unpainted, like the one at the far right; I just add some varnish and a light touch of glitter glue to finish it off.

I've now made 50 of these oyster shell ornaments, and I'm really pleased with how beautifully they've turned out. I've got nearly enough for all the folks on my list, but I'm having so much fun that I'll likely make a few more yet.