WORKING WITH COLOURED CLAY

COLOURED CLAY IS ALSO CALLED 'NERIKOMI'

The Japanese name **'nerikomi'** is translated from **'neri', meaning kneading,** and **'komi', meaning into which** and describes the process where pigments are mixed into wet clay, fusing the colours into the clay rather than applying it onto the surface. Various coloured clays are layered and compressed to form a solid block with a pattern working into the core of the clay. The patterns you create can be simple marbled effects or intricate images and designs. The patterns will reveal themselves when you slice the block in a cross-section.



There are different ways to work with nerikomi.

- ### LARGE BLOCK OF NERIKOMI

If you want to make a large item or many smaller ones, you will have to mix quite a big block of coloured clay. You can create your article by using the whole block of nerikomi.

- ### NERIKOMI COMBINED WITH WHITE CLAY

Or you can combine it with the white clay you used to mix the nerikomi. For instance, you can cut the thick square slab of white clay to the same thickness as the nerikomi slab. The length and width of your nerikomi pattern will vary based on how much white clay you want in your design.

Dampen the sides of both the white clay and the nerikomi slab to make it stick together. Use a cutting harp to cut the combined slab to the desired thickness. The nerikomi pattern will emerge as the combined block gets cut.

Now the thin-sliced combined slab can be either draped over a mould or put into a mould.

I am not interested in making a mass of bowls, so I only made a thin block of nerikomi and did not use a cutting harp to cut the slabs. I cut the shape of the nerikomi pattern that I want in the bowl, from the white clay and lay the nerikomi piece into the space where I made the cutting. The step by step process that follows, with photographs, will explain the method more clearly. Enjoy!

TO CREATE THE COLOURED CLAY

Photo 1

Cut chunks of white clay (I am using porcelain clay), weighing 100 grams and form small pinch pots. The amount of 100-gram balls will depend on the number of colours you want to use. **Add about 8 grams of coloured stain to each pinch pot, add a bit of water and knead well until the colour is integrated.** Let it stand overnight so the colours can dissolve into the clay. Knead them again the following morning. Now you have balls of different coloured clays.



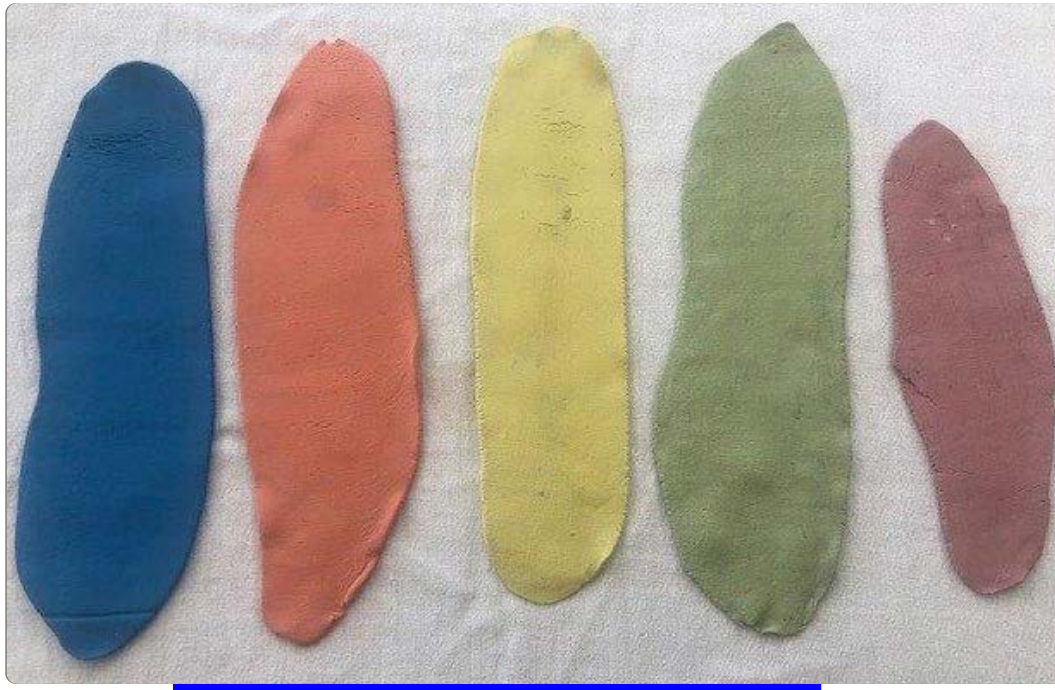


Photo 2

Break each ball of coloured clay into smaller pieces and roll into thin slabs.

Photo 3

Cut the thin slabs into smaller pieces and layer them on top of each other to form a long slab. Avoid air bubbles by pressing with your fingers into the grooves formed as you place the pieces on top of each other.

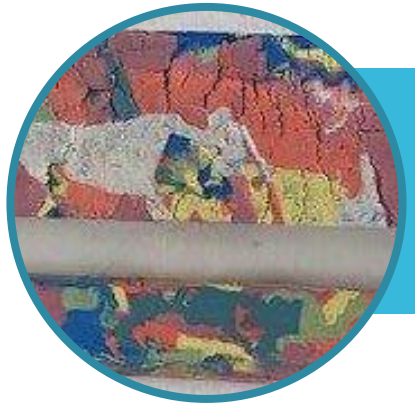
The thickness and length of the nerikomi slab will depend on whatever you plan to do with the nerikomi and where you want to position it.

I am using a simple mould for my bowl and, the length of the nerikomi slab will fit the length of the mould - as demonstrated in the photographs to follow.

The thin slabs that you cut can overlap in different directions, on top of each other.

Make two or more slabs - depending on the quantity of coloured clay you mixed and how many items you want to make. I cut the block diagonally.





Vignette, (Photo 7) shows the pattern when you cut the clay horizontally.

More on this later in this process..

Photo 4

In the photograph, you can see how the clay is layered.



Photo 5

Place the different slabs, depending on how many you made, on top of each other. Now you have a thick slab of nerikomi.



Photo 6 & 7

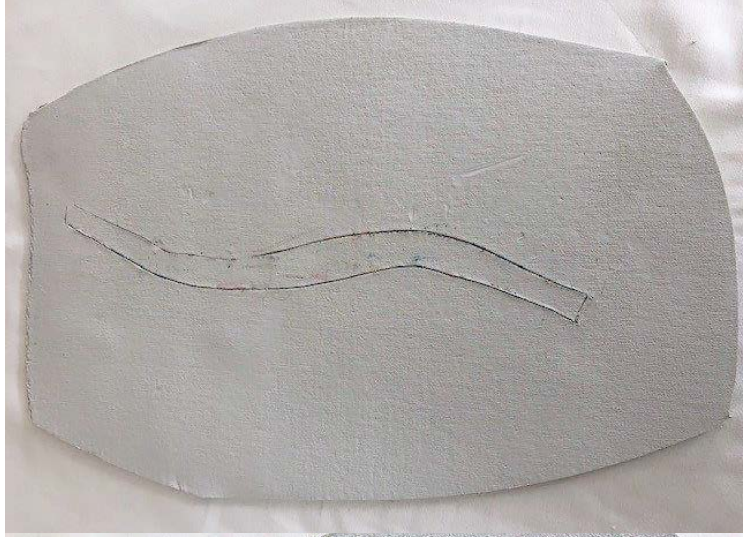
In photo 6 you can see the nerikomi pattern that emerged when I cut the slab **diagonally**.

Photo 7 shows what it will look like if I cut the nerikomi slab **horizontally**.

Photo 8

Roll out a slab of white clay to the desired thickness **– large enough to fit your mould**. In the photo, you can see the mould of the bowl that I made.





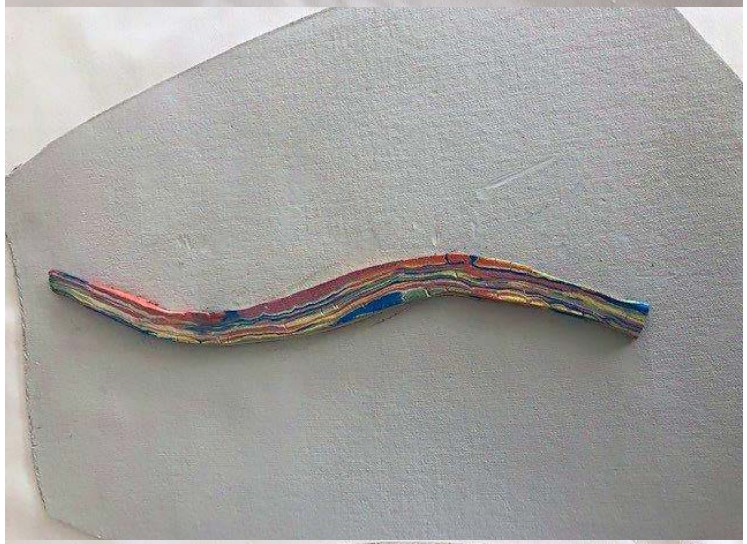




Photo 9, 10 & 11

A diagonally cut slab was used (photo 9) and **altered to form the shape** I wanted. Lay the cut nerikomi slab onto the slab of white clay and mark the edges (photo 10).

Now cut out the marked shape and fit the nerikomi slab into the cut-out space. Roll the nerikomi cutting into the slab. Always **make sure that the cut-out is slightly smaller** than the nerikomi cutting. The nerikomi cutting **can also be a little thicker** than the white slab. The reason for this is that when you roll the nerikomi cutting into the white clay, the nerikomi piece will snugly sink into the white clay and form a cohesive slab (photo 11).

Photo 12 & 13

Take the combined nerikomi and white slab and put it into the mould. Make sure it fits perfectly. Cut off the excess clay on the sides and neaten the edges with a damp sponge.

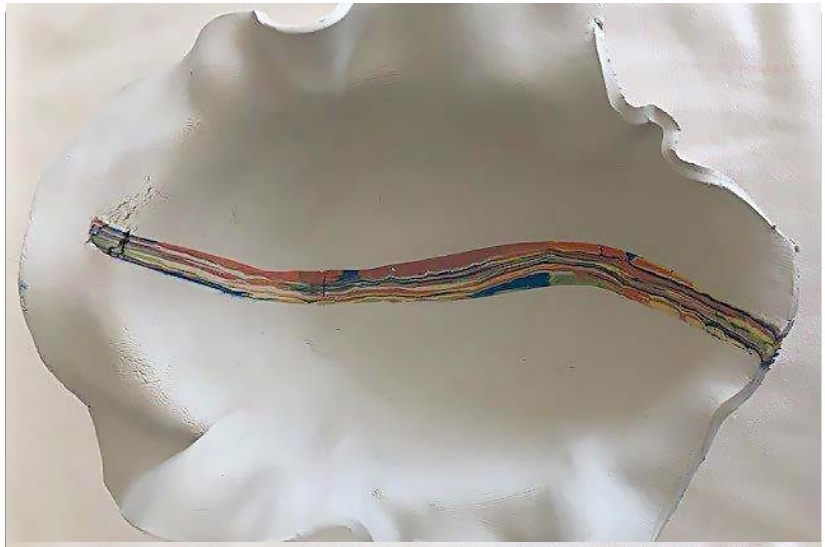






Photo 14

This image shows what the nerikomi pattern looks like on the backside of the bowl.



Photo 15, 16 & 17

I do the same with the horizontally cut nerikomi piece. The pattern looks completely different.