

Riggs' Pop-Off Naked Raku

This process was developed by Charlie and Linda Riggs of North Carolina.

Clay: I use Alligator 210 or Laguna B-Mix.

Preparing the pots: I prefer a smooth surface for this process. After the piece is dry, I sand it with fine sandpaper. I always wear a respirator when dry sanding pottery. I then burnish the piece to get the smoothest possible finish. I sometimes use an OM4 terra sigillata burnished with a soft towel or a stone. I sometimes, after sanding, re-humidify the piece to just past leather hard and burnish with a stone, a cloth, or just my fingers. Most authors I have read bisque burnished pieces to between cone 012 and 010. I use a commercial studio to fire my bisque ware and they bisque to cone 05. This works, but some of the gloss is lost at this high of temperature.

Preparing for Raku firing: Tape off any areas of the piece that you would like to be black after reduction. Use plastic wrap or similar material and painter's tape to seal the opening so the slip does not get into the piece when dipping. Create a tab by folding over the end of the tape. This allows for easy removal of tape and plastic after dipping in slip. Dip the piece in Pop-Off slip – recipe listed below. Allow the slip to firm up for a minute or two. Remove the tape and plastic wrap by pulling the tape tab out and away from the section of the piece where slip was applied. The piece is now ready to fire. No drying is needed.

Firing: Place the pieces in the Raku kiln and heat up slowly to 500 degF. Hold the kiln temperature at 500 degF until it appears all moisture has evaporated. Continue to heat the kiln to 1400 degF.

Reduction: Create a nest of newspaper in the reduction chamber. The Pop-Off slip comes off the piece very easily. Be careful when moving the piece from the kiln to the reduction chamber. Gently place the piece to the reduction chamber and place a sheet of newspaper on top of the piece. Carefully put on the chamber lid. Reduce the piece hard and fast. That is, use heavy reduction but only a few minutes. The piece will over blacken if left in the reduction chamber for an extended amount of time.

After cooling, use a credit card or similar piece of plastic to remove the Pop-Off slip. Seal the piece with acrylic spray, bee's wax, floor wax, or a sealer you prefer. I like Krylon Acrylic Crystal Clear. It can usually be found at hardware stores that carry Krylon products.

There is a video on YouTube of Charlie Riggs explaining the process. Go to www.youtube.com and search for "Riggs Naked Raku."

Riggs Pop-Off Naked Raku slip:

Lincoln Fire Clay	5 parts
EPK	3 parts
Aluminum Hydrate	2 parts

Mix with water to a thick cake batter consistency.