

From : <http://www.valleyswat.net/art/pottery.html>

Impressions of Swat in Mud (The Art of Pottery in Swat)

The traditional valley of Swat has innumerable attractions and attributes which has always tempted and awed visitors from all corners of the world. Its rich history, exclusive handicrafts, delicious delicacies, hypnotizing natural beauty, and unique culture have intrigued the visitors from time immemorial. Earthen pottery is an art that has almost vanished in other cultures and societies and people there do not use any more the artistically designed bowls, plates, and utensils for cooking. The situation in Swat valley is totally opposite the rural community still prefers to use earthen water pots instead of insulated water coolers and earthen cooking utensils instead of silver, brass and steel pots. This craving and love for pottery has kept the art alive and thriving in the rustic valley of Swat of which the simple folk of Swat are proud without a spark of complacency. The rare and skillful artisans of pottery are revered and respected throughout the valley for their rare talent and outstanding creations in the firmament of this art.

Pottery is the art of creating different and recognizable figures and items from kneaded red soil (*Matta Khawra*) on a wheel that is manually operated by the potter with his feet. It's a unique experience and a remarkable sight to watch a potter conjuring up the different figures and shapes. The potter first takes a wet and moldable lump of kneaded mud and fix it on the revolving wheel. Then with a unique movement of his feet, he starts revolving the wheel with his hand around the lump of kneaded mud. By the profound dexterity of his hands, the lump of mud slowly starts to take various shapes depending on the intention of the artist like magic. The artisan then starts designs (flowers, leaves, vines etc) on the nascent pot with his skillful and protective fingers. The story and scenery doesn't end here as shaped pot is then taken and kept in the sun for drying for at least one day. The dried pots are then taken for the last embellishment to a blazing furnace (usually a bonfire created by dung and sticks) where the pots are baked for a considerable period of time depending on the size and shape of the pot. The fire is fanned continuously and the logs are fed without a break till the pots acquire sun burnt reddish colours that is a sign that pots are ready to be used. They are then carefully collected from the ashes, cooled in the shade and carefully exhibited in the market for sale.

The pottery essentials prepared in Swat include earthen utensil, *Katwai* (cooking pot), *Tabai* (flat pan for baking bread), *Tanoor* (cylindrical earthen tunnel fixed in the ground for bread baking), *Chaatti* (a huge cylindrical pot for storing water), *Mangay* (Small egg shaped pot for water), *Martaban* (vase), *Kasa* (plates), *Khanak* (a wide pot with raised edges for washing and kneading purpose), *glasses*, *KatorayKandolay* (for drinking water), *Taal* (huge wide plate) *Khazana* (a designed pot for children to store their money), different decoration pieces in the form of animals and flowers and diverse flowerpots for raising flowers. The most old and accomplished artist of this spectacular art is found in *Fatehpur*, *Charbagh* and the peripheries of *Mingawara Swat*.

This art is slowly and gradually fading in the traditional vale of Swat due to the low earning of the artisans and modern utensils of metal, plastic and china clay. It is incumbent upon every individual and visitor of Swat to appreciate the artisans of this art and encourage them to continue this scarce profession like their ancestors.