

Spring 2009

Dear Friends,

I recently found the most wonderful fabric, and I'm so eager to tell you about it! I had been searching in stores and online to find 100% cotton gingham to make a special apron I plan to embroider. All I could find in the stores were a poly/cotton blends, and the color selection was quite limited.

You know how you visualize something in your mind's eye? I kept imagining a dark red, or black ¼" check that somehow I might tea dye so that the white squares would have a more homey, earthy look. The fabric also had to feel good; I wanted something soft and supple, not stiff like the poly/cotton. Since I plan to do a lot of gingham embroidery on it, I want the needle to just glide through the threads.

After looking online and scouring the quilting sections of fabric stores, I couldn't find anything that was quite what I had in mind. Then my sister-in-law sent me a piece of homespun, and I fell in love with it!

I googled "homespun" and found exactly what I was looking for at Jubilee Fabric! I felt immediately at home at this lovely Christian website, www.jubileefabric.com. Gayla, the owner, explains that homespun is usually all cotton fabric that is woven much as pioneer women once made their own cloth. The threads are yarn dyed and then woven to create each pattern. These are not fabric prints, stamped on by machine!

I love the feel of the homespun; it is soft and supple and easy to needle. But the look of the fabric captured my eye first. The "white" squares in the gingham fabric actually appear tea-dyed – just what I was looking for! There is a nice selection of colors and it was difficult to choose just a few, but I finally settled on a black check, a warm red, and a blue-mocha combination that is quite unique.

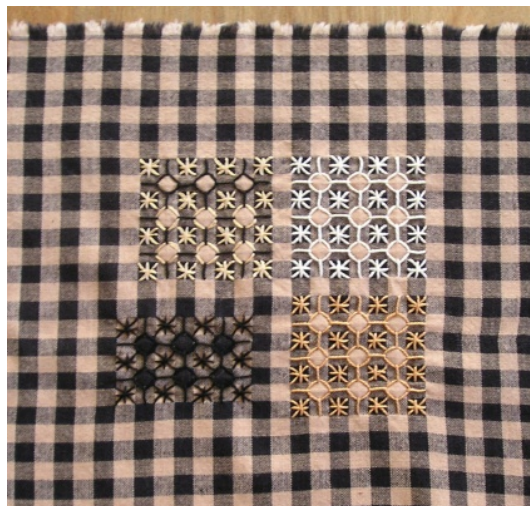
The checked, or gingham fabric, comes in several different sizes. Gayla posts each fabric with a ruler so you can clearly determine the size of the checks. I chose "number 5" fabrics (just a number Gayla assigned this size). The checks on these are 3/8" – a little larger than the ¼" I am accustomed to, but I've already found that this slightly larger check works well for gingham embroidery. The decorative stitching shows up well, and if you are teaching children, I think it's easier for them to begin with a larger check.

There's much more on Gayla's site! Be sure to look at the "Weekend Projects" section for free directions for a variety of projects. The pillow or apron would make good beginner's projects. You could embroider a center square for an extra special look. You'll also find rag quilt instructions on her site, so do take a look.

Here's a piece of Black 5 homespun that I embroidered with the Lace Stitch. I'm "playing" with different colors of pearl cotton and embroidery floss to see what I'd like to use for my apron. On the top right, I began with ivory pearl cotton (size 5). Below that, I used a tan pearl cotton.

Top left, I used black pearl cotton for the running stitches, and for the top row of circles. Then I switched to a gold rayon floss (3 strands), and did the snowflakes in that as well. The rayon is shiny and pretty, but – word of warning – it is slick and rather difficult to work with.

Lower left, I did what is called "Reverse Chicken Scratch" in black pearl cotton. These are the same stitches as the other samples, but the circles are done around the black squares and the snowflakes are done on the light squares (the opposite of the other sections). It creates an interesting effect as you "black out" the light squares. I think it would look dramatic on an apron, or anything else for that matter.



If you'd like more directions on gingham embroidery, visit the Gingham Embroidery section of our website. For more detailed directions, and for Reverse Chicken Scratch, go to the Pegasus website (www.pegasusor.com) for a free lesson. You'll see a photo of three hearts. The Reverse Chicken Scratch is the red heart in the center and directions are near the end of the page.

I hope you'll try some homespun for some of your projects. The natural cotton fibers are nice to stitch on. They do fade, and Gayla recommends that you wash the fabric in cold water, and the first time you wash it, add ¼ Cup of salt to the washer with your detergent. That really helps set the color and reduce fading. Be sure to read her "About Homespun Fabric" section.

Until next time ~

Yours in Him,

Laurie Latour

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