



Spinning Lopi-style Yarn

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Lopi, or to give it its full name "Plotulopi", is the unspun roving just before it goes through the spinning machine at the Istex woollen mill in Iceland. The Icelandic people started to knit with Lopi in the 1920's, and produce their famous patterned yoke Icelandic jumpers from it.

So, the idea is to produce a Lopi-style yarn from your carded Icelandic fleece, but to put a slight twist in the yarn to make it easier to knit and crochet with. The *tag* (long hair-like outer coat) is much longer than the *thel* (short soft under coat) so the long tog hairs hold the thel within the twist. It can be used as a singles yarn rather than plied, or, as with commercial Plotulopi, several strands can be used together to knit with.

Remember, on the sheep the tog hair is for protection in wet weather - rain runs straight off these hairs - and the thel is for protection against the wind. The combined fleece captures air between the fibres to protect from the cold too. When spinning this fleece you want to capture these same qualities in your yarn, and then in whatever you produce with this yarn.

Prior to the production of Lopi, the Icelandic people would spin the fleece much more tightly, particularly if they were using the yarn to knit an outer garment that had to be both windproof and waterproof. In fact, much of the time tog and thel were used separately.

To start spinning Lopi-style you may need to reduce the tension on your spinning wheel, and also treadle more slowly, in order to put considerably less twist into the fibre than you would normally do. As you get used to handling the fibre and controlling the amount of twist you will be able to treadle faster. Lopi-style can be of various thicknesses as a singles yarn; from bulky to a fine lace weight.

Washing your Yarn

I have tried various methods and substances for washing my spun Icelandic yarn, and the following method is the one I am happiest with.

Wind the spun yarn carefully onto a niddy-noddy to make a skein. Tie each quarter of the skein with fine string or cotton - NOT spun wool as this will matt up in the new yarn - then remove the skein from the niddy-noddy.

You will have to hand wash the skein. Place it in hand hot water containing a sprinkling of washing soda and a washing liquid specially formulated for wool/silk (I use Adritt wool & silk from Lidl). Slowly move the skein back and forth in the water to ensure the water soaks into all of the fibres, squeezing the skein gently a few times. Remove the skein from the water, and squeeze it gently along its length to remove excess soap and water. Rinse the skein in warm water using the same back and forth movements. Take the skein out, and gently squeeze out the excess water. Rinse the skein again in luke warm water with a fabric conditioner added (I use lavender & camomile scented Lenor). Take the skein out,

squeeze out excess water and then hang the skein up to drip dry. Always squeeze the skein. Never wring it!

Set and stretch the twist by attaching weights to the bottom of the spun yarn. This not only reduces any kinks in the yarn but also spreads the twist. I use several full shower gel containers as my weights because they hook over the skein easily. I then gently pull down on the skein a few times to stretch it even more!

The following day turn the skein once in order to move the weights further on so that underneath the weights dries as quickly as the rest of the skein. It drips dry very quickly. Remove weights after a few days and finish drying process.

The spun wool will be soft and fluffy, and will retain all the feel of the original fleece. The yarn will be slightly felted, which gives it added strength.

Fleece from Cae'rddraig

If you purchase fleece from me it will already have been washed, and ready to be drumcarded. I recommend drumcarding in order to mix the tog and thel fibres together before spinning ([refer to separate instruction sheet](#)). The tog is too long for you to use handcarders to mix the fibres. You must wash the wool (as above) after you have spun it because I try and leave in some lanolin during my initial wash of the fleece.

If you want to try separating tog and thel fibres either by hand, dog comb, with hackles or Viking combs, then you will need to advise me of this when you place an order for fleece as the normal washing process tends to mix the locks together. To retain individual locks I have to wash each separately.

Drumcarded Icelandic fleece is also suitable for felting. Have a go at fine gossamer felt, it is so easy to make ([refer to separate instruction sheet](#)). But it is easier if you use an Icelandic fleece that contains more thel than tog, so that the fibres cling together better.

Jill Tyrer ©

Cae'rddraig Icelandic Sheep

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