Amateur Milliners Fashion Own Easter Bonnets

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Amateur Milliners—

THE WHITE STRAW HAT trimmed with delicately tinted silk organza petals and a narrow green velvet ribbon that Suzanne Dahlmeier, T.C. 8, will be wearing this Easter may look like a “French Room” creation but it isn’t. Her mother, Mrs. Willis Dahlmeier, made it for her in a hatmaking class taught by Mrs. Eugene Criss, an Iowa State graduate.

Six yards of straw braid were woven over a buckram frame to make Suzanne’s modified bucket hat. The hat was lacquered with milliner’s sizing to make the straw weather resistant and lustrous. Then the frame was removed.

When making fabric covered hats Mrs. Criss’ students use the buckram frame as a base for the hat which is not removed. These frames are machine made of coarse linen or hemp cloth stiffened with sizing. The fabric is first shaped and stretched over a wooden balsa head block if the crown of the hat is rounded. Then the fabric is carefully fitted over the buckram frame.

Balsa head blocks come in various head sizes and are also used to hold the hat when the frame is being designed.

Mrs. Criss stocks a variety of exterior millinery fabrics. Many of these have a jersey back which makes them easier to work with. The variations of basic straw cloth are most popular in the spring and summer. With the coming of fall the hat makers like to use milliner’s satin, suede cloth and fur cloth. Panne velvet with its long flat nap is also quite popular.
Fashion Their Own Easter Bonnets

Shaping a lining on a balsa head block is Mrs. Leo Fritschen of Ames.

A hat nears completion as the lining is hand stitched into place.

A bit of trim adds color and individuality to this straw cloth hat.

All ready for the Easter parade is Suzanne Dahlmeier, T.C. 3, below.

The lining must be pliable. It is pinned into place and hand stitched to finish the interior of the hat. Rayon and light taffeta are good for linings. Cotton lace is the only cotton fabric that can be used because it is pliable and other cotton fabrics are too tightly woven or too heavily sized. For making cocktail hats the milliners may use one flannel covered so that leaves or other decorations can be glued right onto the frame. A net frame with a cotton lace backing is used in much the same way as the flannel covered frame except that in this case some of the frame can be allowed to show through.

Wire frames, some of which resemble rose stems and others which are velvet covered, can be quickly changed to suit the mood by adding or removing an ornament. Flowers, leaves, or berries are merely twisted on the frame.

Sometimes they use a birdcage veil instead of a frame. This veil fits over the top of the head and may be decorated with rhinestones, flowers or velvet ribbons.

Sound simple? Perhaps someday soon you'll be making your own Easter bonnet too.