

HOHOKAM LIFESTYLE

The Hohokam were a people group that lived in central Arizona around 30-1500 C.E. Archaeologists have used the term “Hohokam”, deriving from the O’odham word Huhugam, to describe the people group and culture during that period. The Hohokam are best known for their innovative canal system that used the waters of the Salt and Gila rivers to irrigate vast agricultural lands. Their agricultural lifestyle allowed them to remain sedentary, or in one place. Incredible villages were built in the Phoenix and Tucson basins. These villages were occupied by thousands of people at one time. These large-scale villages brought lively culture, arts, and social practices.

The Arts in the Desert

Unearthing pottery from the Hohokam society has given archaeologists a chance to better understand the people from the past. Pottery from as early as 300 C.E. can be found at many archaeological sites. Some evidence suggests that the Hohokam traded with other cultures in the Southwest and Latin America. During the classic period of Hohokam society we see beautiful pottery made from the sand and clay of the desert rivers and washes. Pottery from this time was painted with a vibrant red paint made from the iron-rich soil. They painted intricate geometric shapes as well as plants and animals found in the desert. The Hohokam used natural materials for their pottery. The dried leaves of the yucca plant were used as a paint brush.

How the Hohokam Made Pottery

Pottery makers in the Hohokam society would use a technique called coiling. This method of pottery making involved rolling a rope of clay to layer on top of each other. Once the pottery vessel was to the desired height and shape, the artist would use a paddle and anvil to smooth out the coils. After the vessel was fired and hardened, Hohokam people would then paint designs and images. Some pottery was more intricate than others.

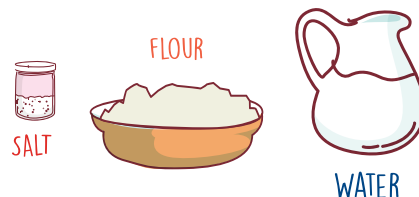


Making Your Own Pottery

To make your own pottery, you can make your own clay from material found in your kitchen!

MATERIALS

- 1 cup of salt
- 2 cups of flour
- ¾ cup of water



INSTRUCTIONS

1. Stir the salt and flour together in a large bowl. Gradually add the water until ingredients are combined.
2. Knead dough until the texture is smooth and elastic.
3. Bake your pottery in a 180 degree oven.

HOW TO MAKE YOUR VESSEL

1. Make a thin disk for the base of your vessel.
2. Roll out a thin, rope-like piece of dough.
3. Layer your ropes of dough on top of each other.
4. Once you have the shape and height of your pottery, pinch the layers together and smooth them out with your thumb.
5. Bake your creation in the oven.
6. When your vessel has cooled, paint the pottery with your desired designs. Use natural colors of brown, red, and white.

PAINTING YOUR VESSEL

If you live near a yucca plant, you can also paint your vessel in a similar fashion to the Hohokam people. Find a dried yucca leaf and cut a clean cross-section off of the end. Use a rock to gently pull off the leaves outer layer. This will expose the thick spiny fibers inside the leaves. After you have removed the outer layer of the yucca leaf, you can now use your tool as a paint brush for your pottery. Use red, brown, or black paints to create geometric designs, plant or animal images on your pottery.



ARIZONA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

For more learning and educational activities, visit the [Arizona History Digital Hub](https://azhs.org) at azhs.org.

Pioneer Museum and Riordan Mansion State Historic Park, Flagstaff | Arizona Heritage Center at Papago Park, Tempe
Arizona History Museum, Downtown History Museum and Fort Lowell Museum, Tucson
Sanguinetti House Museum & Gardens, Yuma