

TRADITIONAL HANDSPUN FLAX – “Bauernlein” or Farmhouse Linen

I was fortunate to learn to spin flax living in Europe, where handspun flax skeins and balls are frequently on display in local museums. Nicely spun, it varies greatly in color and grist. There is quite a bit of latitude on what can be judged as nicely spun linen yarn.

The photos that follow are from a visit to Lily Weisgerber-Peters in Luxembourg some years ago and represent a collection of handspun skeins given to her by people who know she prizes it. At the time of the visit she was using these varied skeins as weft on a striped warp for a plain weave tablecloth. The sett was not over 28 epi.





What a treasure to have so many variations to choose from and utilize in various woven fabrics.

Last summer I finally went out on the terrace and followed the tradition I learned in:
On the right is a lady in lower Saxony, in front of the stove in a blue print apron spinning flax.



On the left, here I am, and the apron is real, purchased from a print maker in Pulsnitz while on a trip to Germany.



I have always loved the photos of women spinning flax – while it is not the most pleasant fiber to spin, the spinner usually has a look of peaceful enjoyment – which, with a bit of practice, isn't hard to duplicate.

Start slowly and carefully – the linen yarn you spin will be a treasure.

The three fabrics below are from a book of photos showing a wide range of linen fabrics. The page refers to "Bauernlein" – and it shows that these examples, especially the two on the right are a little bit rough around the edges – as one would expect.



This photo is from a book of photos of linen fabrics and is "Bauernlein" the fabrics woven of the handspun linen of yesteryear. It is not what is touted here in the US - we always have to pretend we're better than the rest of the world and need only the "very best". 1. is a "Überhandtuch" the towel that covered the ones you used 2. is a patterned weave 3. is just plain old plain weave - farmhouse style.