

Vacation Memory Bracelet

by Colleen White



Now that cooler weather is upon us, we find ourselves looking back on those sunny summer vacation days.

So here's a way to remember all year long! Small items you may have picked up on your trip are the beginnings of your memory bracelet - shells or coral from the beach, small knickknacks with interesting patterns, or - our favorite - swizzle sticks.

Although not as popular as they used to be, they are still used by fancy bars and resorts. Or check your local yard sales where they can often be picked up for pennies. This collection is from vintage tiki bars all over the USA. But you can theme your bracelet with whatever you like.



Materials:

- BronzClay (About 50 grams)
- Two part silicone molding compound
- Swizzle sticks, shells, small moldable objects
- Craft knife
- Roller and work mat
- Silicone tip cone molding tool
- Coffee warmer or clay drier
- Metal Clay sanding and finishing tools
- Metal Clay compatible bronze wire 20 gauge
(Rio Grande carries bronze wire that works great with Metal Adventures bronze clays)

Or premade loops for metal clay, one for each charm

7” of chain and a jump ring and clasp to match your clay color

Jump rings – one for each charm

Jump ring tool or needle nose pliers

Round nose pliers

Wire cutters

Optional:

Headpins – 10 – 30 – depends how full you want your bracelet to be

Assorted beads to fit headpins



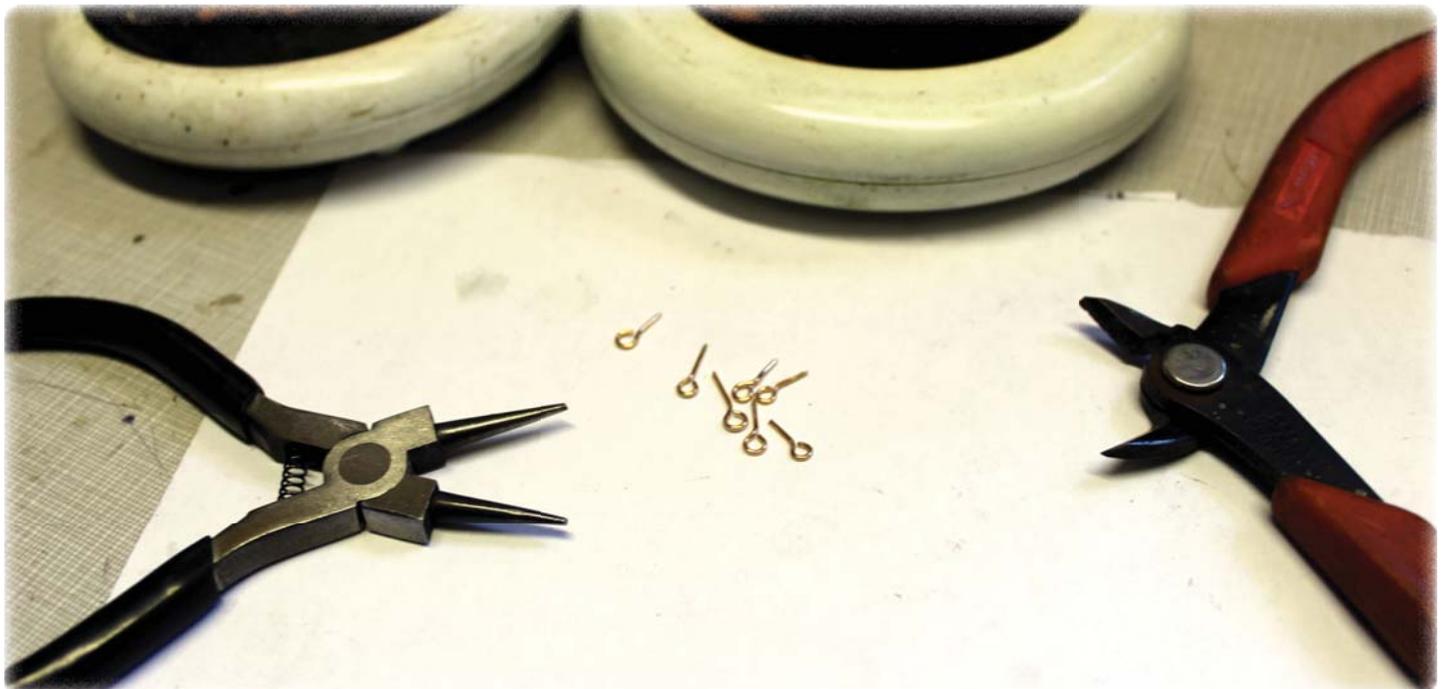
If you're working off of swizzle sticks, it's easy to just lay them flat on the table and press molding compound over them. Very thick items won't work well as they get too heavy, so if you're using seashells, mold the outside, but make the back hollow for less weight. Mix equal amounts of your two part molding compound until all marbling is gone. Gently press over your item to be molded. Let it set up until stiff and unmold.



Roll out bronze clay 3 cards thick. Lay over mold and trim off excess. With a well oiled silicone tipped tool, press the excess clay from the outside towards the center until you can see the outer rim of the mold. Any clay that is above the level of the mold is too much; trim it down with a swipe of a tissue blade. Smooth the back with a damp sponge tip tool for a lot less sanding work later. Start with a tight circular motion to blend all the clay layers, than long smooth strokes to smooth it all down. Place on burner to dry thoroughly. You can place the molds face down, as the pieces dry, they will drop out of the molds onto the burner. Just lift the molds off when this happens so the top side can finish drying.



While the charms are drying, make you loops with bronze clay compatible 20 gauge wire. Check YouTube for tutorials if you're unsure on this. Make a small 1/4" loop for each charm with a 1/4 " "tail" of wire. Set aside.



When your charms are completely dry, sand and finish each one. Drill a small hole in the top and using a bit of slip, slide the wire loop into the hole. Add a tiny bit of clay through the bottom of the loop to secure it to the charm. As the clay fires, it will tighten up on the loop and make it impossible to pull out. If your charm is too thin, add the loop by using a small strip of clay on the back side to hold the wire, and then smooth it over when dry. Fire charms as directed by clay manufacturer.



Tumble, wire brush, or patina charms to your desired finish. Using jump rings and needle nose pliers or a jump ring tool, attach charms to bracelet chain. Add assorted beads on headpins between the charms or small shells with holes – anything that reminds you of your wonderful vacation. Attach a jump ring to one end of the chain and a clasp to the other. Now on those dreary winter days, you can wear your vacation bracelet and remember the sunny times.

Other suggestions:

The scrapbook section of craft stores are full of themed collections of (easy to mold) near flat items – a great place to look for extras to fill in your bracelet or make one of the projects below.

Make a bracelet by making one charm from each vacation and watch it load up over the years with wonderful memories.

Make a “baby” bracelet by molding small items from a baby shower; add a charm with the child’s birthdate and name for a new mother. (Pink beads for a girl, blue for a boy)

Make a “wedding” bracelet by molding small items from the wedding shower and wedding, adding a charm with the date and bride and groom’s names. (Add lots of pearls to this one!)

Make a high school or college bracelet – much better than all those little memories being lost in a drawer somewhere. Use beads in school colors between the charms.

Don’t wear bracelets? Make a necklace from your charms. Long boho chain necklaces with charms scattered along them are very popular – and will give you room for years of vacation memories to come!



With a heritage of artists and craftsmen (her father was a silversmith & lapidary and her grandfather was a painter & woodcarver) Colleen came by her creative instincts naturally. In school she studied photography and fine art, and her interest in jewelry design began with beaded pieces in the 1960’s. She carries on the fine craftsmanship learned from her forebears, creating unique adornment with unusual materials.

Colleen designs and builds custom jewelry, goblets & tiaras, and also does custom stonecutting. She is certified in Precious Metal Clay through Rio Rewards and member of the PMC Guild of America since 2004.

Colleen teaches jewelry classes at USF and Art Center Manatee as well as offering private instruction in her home studio in Bradenton, Florida. She also provides group workshops, home jewelry shows and creative jewelry parties for both adults and children. See her schedule on her website, www.CWhiteJewelry.com, or on Facebook at Colleen White Jewelry Design. Her work has been published in Studio PMC, PolymerCAFÉ Magazine, Metal Clay Artist Magazine, Metal Clay Today magazine, and Lark Books “1000 Beads”.