

blending luxury fibers



DIY blending report sheets for self
experimentation and sample recording,

by **Woolwench** for www.fiberygoodness.com

Edited by Arlene Thayer

index

DIY construction plans

- Blending
 - working out percentages
 - tips
 - choosing fibers to blend

Tools and equipment

Record sheets

two fiber blends:
(with Merino or similar)

- cashmere
- alpaca
- yak
- silk
- angora
- baby camel

three fiber blends

- merino-silk-angora
- merino - alpaca - silk
- cashmere - silk - alpaca
- angora - merino - silk

Own blends record sheets

Notes sheets

Luxury Fiber Cheat Sheet

Introduction

Welcome to the wondrous wonderful world of super soft and super fine fibers, brought to you by some exotic animals and their beautiful fluff.

We often get a bit stuck in the rut of our 'go to' fibers, the trusty ones that we know about, understand, and can process and spin in a variety of ways. But sometimes its pretty awesome to step outside of that and try something new, something special, and with these fibers you can always be sure of it being a treat. Cashmere, Silk, Baby Camel... even the names sound exotic and luxurious. However this can also be a little intimidating, and we might not even know where to start with something like this, experimenting with new fibers.

So I have created this 'lab report' book to share with you, including some information about each of the six luxury fibers I chose to focus on, some tips for blending them, choosing which fibers to put together, and the kinds of tools and spinning methods you can use for them.

Following these info sheets are the 'lab reports' pages, ready for you to fill in with your own experiences, tools, blend percentages, and add your fiber and yarn samples for reference and comparison later.

It can be exciting to try different blending possibilities, and to have a place to record them means you will have your own permanent log of the fibers you have tried, the blends that you used, and the resulting yarn you gained from it. Have a special project to spin for? Consult your sample book to find the best blend to suit your needs. I hope this will become a wonderful resource for you to use and share!

Suzy

Experimentation is also possible, and keeping a record of the different percentages and the resulting fiber in a log such as this gives you a permanent resource to draw upon as well as a hands on example of what the different blends you try out will look and feel like.



tools and equipment

Tools for blending fiber are varied, and you may find you have particular preferences for one kind of blending method over another. It is good to try them all and find the one that best suits you, and your fibers.

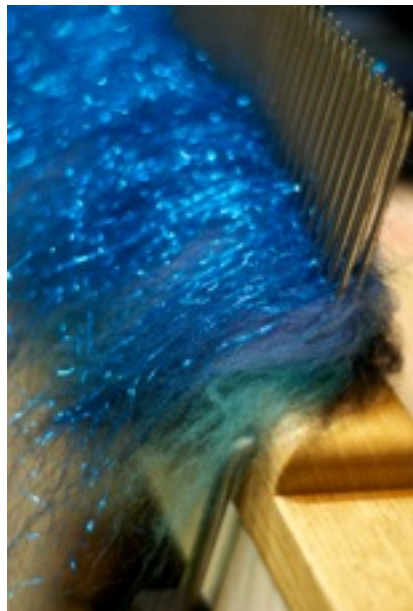
When **drum carding** fine fibers you need a drum carder with a fine, or very fine carding cloth, with tines that are close together and made for this kind of work,

anything around 90-120tpi (tines per inch) is ideal. This not only makes for a good even blending but also reduces the risk of damaging the fibers. The resulting batt should be evenly blended with few or no noils.

Hand cards can also be used to make rolags to spin from, creating a preparation particularly suited to spinning 'woollen', making a slightly fuzzy and very warm yarn.

Combs are a wonderful way to prepare your luxury fibers, you can pull combed fibers off to make your own roving, by hand or with a diz, giving you a preparation suitable for spinning smooth or worsted. There is little waste and the resulting yarn will have a nice smooth definition and drape.

A **hackle** is also a great tool for making your own blended roving, producing a combed preparation in which fibers are removed from the hackle with a diz to create a light and lofty roving.



notes on cashmere

Cashmere comes from the underbelly area of the Cashmere Goat, in fact there are a variety of goats who produce 'Cashmere' rather than a single specific breed. It has both a down undercoat and longer, coarser guard hairs. The down is soft and generally between 8-18microns and about 2.5cm - 8cm long, while the guard hairs are around 30 microns and can be as long as 20cm. To get the nice soft warm yarn that we associate with Cashmere it is important to first de-hair it to remove those coarse guard hairs. Cashmere should feel silky and soft, and it is both light and very warm, with a beautiful drape. Cashmere fabrics do not wrinkle or shrink as easily as other fibers although the individual fibers have less strength than other fine wools.

For spinning, if there are guard hairs they should be easily distinguishable from the down and easy to remove (by combing). Since the fibers are quite delicate there is a high chance of breakage during processing and the result will be fiber with a lot of noils, so if blending with other fibers treat it with care.

Since it is such a fine fiber, Cashmere spins beautifully into a fine yarn. It needs plenty of twist and will also bulk out when washed, so spin finer than you think you need to. It can also be nicely blended with other fibers to add loft and elasticity. In this record book are a number of possible blend options and different blending methods already listed to trial and make samples for, you can also use the extra forms to try your own blends too. Combing is a great (and gentle) way to blend cashmere with other fibers. See also 'drum carding fine luxury fibers' for blending tips.

sample one

100% **cashmere**

roving

spun woollen

short forward draw

wheel:

tension:

sample twenty-two

10% angora

40% merino

50% silk

drum carded

spun semi-worsted

short forward draw

wheel:

tension:

(see notes on carding fine fibers for tips)