

## ScrapBusters: Fancy Border Tea Towels

Editor: Liz Johnson  
Tuesday, 12 January 2016 1:00



As with so many things tea-related, the tea *towel* comes to us by way of Great Britain where it originated as a special drying cloth for expensive tea services. Linen was the fabric of choice because its smooth, simple weave was unlikely to scratch fine china or glass. Our Fancy Border Tea Towels are more casual than their noble ancestors, but are still a wonderful addition to any kitchen and a perfect gift for a wedding shower or house warming. This is a great project for your longer fabric scraps. We worked with width of fabric (WOF) pieces to make it fast and easy. Each towel starts with just one 4" and one 3" strip, which are then trimmed to fit the base towel.



Back in the days of *Downton Abbey*, servants were usually charged with hand hemming and embroidering the tea towels. Their embellishment ranged from simple hand stitching to extremely intricate embroidery. Besides drying, the towels were also often used as a cozy – wrapped around a tea pot, or as a basket warmer – wrapped around or laid on top of a serving bowl to keep scones, cakes, and biscuits warm. The functionality of today's tea towels remain, but the construction is much faster and easier... especially if you're a little light on the kitchen staff.



Our sample towels have a lovely vintage feel. Their bright, retro fun designs came originally from the *Simply Sweet* collection by Barbara Jones for Henry Glass. You can vary your own fabric selections to create the same nostalgic mood or change it up with modern neutrals, pretty pastels or traditional florals.



If you're making more than one towel, consider using a matching accent fabric, as we did with our stripes, to pull them together into a coordinated set.



Our steps show a clever way to attach the bands to a ready-made towel for a clean finish from all sides. You could, of course, make your own base towel. Start with a lightweight, 100% cotton fabric, then add a narrow hem all around. Our purchased towels were 33" wide x 35" high.

## Sewing Tools You Need

*We* Janome MyStyle 100

- 13 stitches + 4-step buttonhole
- Easy stitch selection knobs
- Touch-and-hold reverse stitch

**JANOME**  
WHAT'S NEXT

- Sewing machine and standard presser foot
- Quarter Inch Seam foot or Edge Guide foot; *optional for topstitching*

## Fabric and Other Supplies



**Supplies listed are for ONE towel.**

- Scrap or  $\frac{1}{8}$  yard of 44"+ standard weight cotton fabric for the wide feature band
- Scrap or  $\frac{1}{8}$  yard of 44" standard weight cotton fabric for the narrow accent band
- ONE lightweight tea towel: our towels were similar to but a bit larger than these *Flour Sack Towels* from *Crate & Barrel*, which come in affordable sets of three
- All purpose thread to match fabrics
- See-through ruler
- Tape measure
- Fabric pen or pencil
- Iron and ironing board
- Scissors or rotary cutter and mat
- Seam gauge
- Seam ripper
- Straight pins

## Getting Started

1. Cut one 3" x 44" (WOF) strip from the accent fabric.
2. Cut one 4" x 44" (WOF) strip from the feature fabric.
3. Measure the width of your tea towel. Add 1" to this measurement, then trim down both your fabric strips to this new measurement.
4. Remove the pre-sewn hem from one end of the tea towel.



# At Your Sewing Machine & Ironing Board

1. Fold the smaller accent strip in half (so it is now 1½"), right sides together. Sew across both short ends, using a ½" seam allowance.



2. Clip the corners and trim seam allowances to ¼". Turn right side out, push out the top corners so they are nice and sharp, and press flat.
3. Place the towel wrong side up on your work surface. Pin the accent strip to the bottom cut edge of the towel, aligning the raw edges. In addition, if your measurements were careful, the seamed sides of the accent strip should be perfectly in line with the hemmed side edges of the towel.



4. Lay the 4" feature fabric strip right side down on top of the accent strip/tea towel. Center this feature fabric strip so there is an extra ½" extending beyond the accent strip/tea towel at each side.



5. Using a 1/2" seam allowance, sew across the width of the tea towel through all the layers. Start and stop at the exact edge of the tea towel.

NOTE: *Because of the gauzy nature of the tea towel, sew the seam with the tea towel face down on the bed of the machine against the feed dogs. This will help the multiple layers from shifting.*

6. Fold the feature strip and the tea towel up on either side of the accent strip. The accent strip becomes the bottom of the towel and the feature strip is now laying face up against the right side of the tea towel. Press the seam.



7. Fold the feature strip back down, away from the tea towel, so you again reveal the seam. Press up the long raw edge of the feature strip 1/2".



8. Fold in the extra fabric at each side of the feature strip 1/2" to align with the hemmed edge of the tea towel. Press in place,

adjusting as necessary to make sure the fabric's edge is super neat and flush with the edge of the tea towel.



9. Bring the feature strip back up against the front of the tea towel, keeping the edges flush and the fabric nice and flat against the front of the tea towel. Pin in place along the sides and across the top of the strip.



10. Edgestitch around all four sides of the feature strip: up each side, across the top and along the bottom seam. This top stitching will be quite visible, so be very careful to keep your seam line straight and remember to pivot at each corner.



NOTE: You could switch to a [Quarter Inch Seam foot](#) and run its flange along the folded edge of the feature strip. Although a bit wider than the  $\frac{1}{8}$ " of traditional edgestitching, it would ensure a lovely straight and even line of stitching. Another presser foot option is [Janome Edge Guide foot](#).



## Contributors

Project Design: Alicia Thommas

Sample Creation and Instructional Outline: Michele Mishler

## Tags:

- [ScrapBusters](#)

### [Kitchen Linens](#)

[ScrapBusters: Rainbow Zippered Pouches in Two Sizes](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Moroccan Style Deco Stitch Tea Towels](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Passport Cover in Faux Leather](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Cord Wraps in Two Sizes](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Full Circle Zippered Sewing \(& More\) Case](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Soothing Eye Pillows](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Lace Overlay Clutch](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Quilted Wrap Front Belt with Bead Accents](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Sewn Paper & Fabric Greeting Card](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Clip on or Slip on Belt Pouch](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Two-Tone Gift Bags in Three Sizes](#)  
[Key Ring Gift Card Case: ScrapBusters](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Rustic Sachets with Hand Stitched Accents](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Sparkly Hair Clips](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Playful Appliquéd Owls Placemat Set](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Leather Coasters](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Mini Pouf Patchwork Pincushion](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Outdoor Mini Mats](#)  
[Lip Balm Key Ring Mini Case](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Fabric Bowl Covers](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Reversible Headband Ties or Hair Wraps](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Flatware Pockets for Outdoor Dining](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Companion Pouch Set](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Scrappy Ruffled Oven Mitts](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Drop-In Zippered Pouch with Lanyard](#)  
[ScrapBusters: Quilted Mug Rug with Napkin Pocket](#)

[ScrapBusters: Companion Pouches](#)

[ScrapBusters: Ruffled Patchwork Table Runner](#)

[ScrapBusters: Personalized Mug Rug](#)

[ScrapBusters: Vintage Style Headband Ties](#)

1

[2](#)

[next ›](#)

[last »](#)

This project and patterns (if any) may be downloaded for personal use only. No electronic or printed reproduction permitted without the prior written consent of Sew4Home LLC.

Copyright 2009-2016 Sew4Home LLC. All Rights Reserved.

---

**Source URL:** <http://www.sew4home.com/projects/kitchen-linens/scrapbusters-fancy-border-tea-towels>