

1. MAKING THE SAGGAR

It all starts with building the saggar. You will have to consider its size, its shape, and the type of clay to use. In the firing process, due to the combustion of the materials you are going to add, temperatures inside the saggar will rise faster than outside it. At cooldown, the kiln temperature will drop faster than the temperature in the saggar. The saggar must be able to withstand these thermal shocks. Furthermore, for fire to burn inside the saggar, oxygen must be able to enter. And at cooldown, some of the heat inside must be able to escape. Finding the ideal shape for a saggar is an ongoing process. Take a look at my website for my latest tips!

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- > Use a coarse grog clay, preferably raku or refractory (high-fire) clay.
- > The best shape for a saggar is a cylinder, since that reduces the number of joins. Joins are vulnerable spots.
- > Make all the saggar walls about 0.5"/1 cm thick.
- > To ensure oxygen supply, make a hole of about 1"/2 cm in diameter in the wall, approximately 2.5"/7 cm below the top. In a saggar more than 10"/25 cm wide, pierce two holes, opposite each other.
- > Take 11"/30 cm as a maximum for both diameter and height of the saggar. A saggar larger than that will become difficult to handle. In addition, the great amount of combustibles that such a saggar could contain would make it too hot, increasing the risk of cracking.
- > Provide for a flat top side, so you can properly close off the saggar by covering it with a kiln shelf.
- > Before using the saggar, fire it to a minimum of 2102°F/1150°C.

WORKING METHOD

If the pieces of work you want to saggar-fire will always have the same shape, make your saggar just slightly larger than that shape, with a play of about 1.5"/4 cm all around and 2.5"/6 cm on top. Alternatively, you can make a saggar in which several pieces can be fired in a single batch.

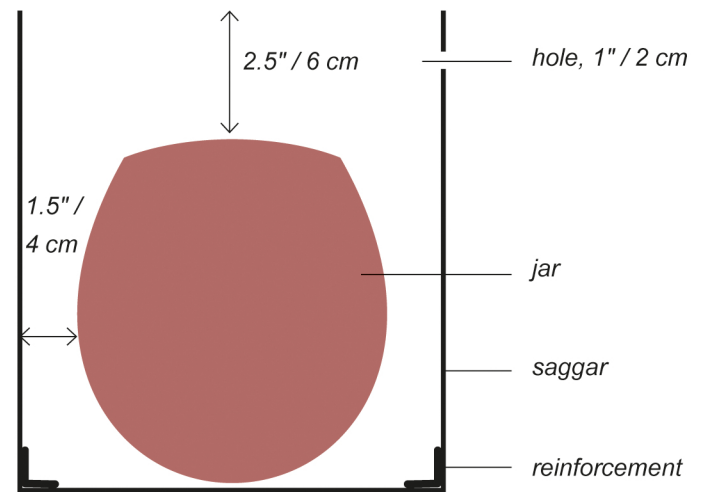


Figure 1: saggar for my jar project

Use a support shape that has the form and size you want your saggar to have: a large can, a big tube, or some similar object. Cover the support shape first with a layer of paper and then with a layer of plastic. This will make it easier to remove the support shape later on.



If you are good on the pottery wheel, you can also throw a saggar. Use a coarse grog clay.

1

Roll 0.5"/1 cm thick slabs for the saggar's bottom and wall. Cut the wall to the correct length and height. The ends must overlap on the support shape. Make these edges a little thinner than the rest of the slab. Allow the slabs to dry until they are more manageable but still bend well.



2

Place the support shape on the clay slab and roll the clay around the support shape.



3

Using a fork, score the overlapping edges and apply slip. Press the ends together tightly.



4

Set the shape upright and press the overlap just a bit more.

5

Find out where to place the cylinder shape on the bottom slab. Using a fork, score the bottom slab and apply slip.



6 —————
Place the cylinder on the bottom slab and cut out the bottom, making it about 0.5"/1 cm larger than the cylinder.



7 —————
Push the protruding edge upward against the cylinder with a wooden modeling tool. Then take out the support form.



8 —————
Apply slip on the inside, at the join between bottom and wall.



9 —————
Apply a roll of clay to the join and press it, making sure no air is left underneath.



10 —————
Cut a hole 1"/2 cm in diameter, about 2.5"/7 cm below the top of the wall. Make sure the top side is completely flat so that a kiln shelf can be placed on it.



11 —————
With a larger saggar, it may be useful to add handles on the side wall.