

# My Brat- A Guide

by Julie Ann Glaz (aka Liliane) from the Order of the Golden Lion

During the month the Gods of Academia had decided to give me between semesters, I managed to make myself a cloak for those chilly spring nights that are swiftly approaching us. Because my developing persona is a Celt, I decided to make a brat (rhymes with drought), or a cloak like the Irish would have made around the 5th century AD. Despite my dislike for sewing, the brat was not all that difficult to make. I would say from start (when the cloth hit the table to be cut) to finish it took no longer than 5 hours to complete, and this is a generous estimate, especially for those who are more skilled at sewing than I.

When making a brat, the first thing you'll want to do is pick the material you want to use. Wool is your fabric of choice, since not only is it what the Celts themselves would have used, but it's also really warm. Finding wool, however, might be difficult if you want to buy it from a store like the Ragshop, Joann's, or JoMar's. If you don't mind not feeling the fabric before you buy it, there are many websites online that will have some kind of wool. Choose about 3 yards of a solid color that's bright (like red, blue, or green), or a pattern like plaid or houndstooth. If you're concerned with wool being itchy, you can line your brat with a softer material. Don't worry, lining is period! Use linen in either a contrasting bright color or a neutral tone. (Or, if you want the inside of your brat to be really soft, you can cheat a little and use cotton flannel...either cloth will add another layer for even more warmth, but the flannel wrinkles less.) A note: while wool is usually sold in 60" wide bolts, linen is often sold only 45" wide. Check the fabric you want to purchase for its width; if your lining IS only 45", you'll need approximately 5 yards so you can piece it together later. When you get home, wash and dry your lining material on moderate settings to remove any added chemicals and to pre-shrink it. **DO NOT MACHINE DRY YOUR WOOL!** I'm unsure what would happen if you did, but I have it on good authority that the results would not be pretty. Now begins the actual creation process. (If your lining fabric is the same width as your wool, skip this next step.) In order for your whole brat to be lined, cut your lining so that it's the same length, then cut another strip to cover the leftover width and a bit extra for a seam, probably approx. 16"-17", and sew the two strips together. Next, put your two layers' right sides together and sew the wool to the lining fabric along both long edges. If you want your brat to be fringed, stop sewing approx. 2"-3" from each end. (A traditional brat would naturally be fringed on at least two sides because of the way the wool was woven.) Once this is done, turn the garment right side out. If you chose to make fringe, trim the lining on the short ends leaving approx. 3/4" from where you stopped sewing for a hem. With or without fringe, turn under the lining and stitch across.



Now your brat is finished! To fringe, pick at the right or left corner of the fabric until you find the top thread and pull. If it doesn't come off easily, look between the vertical threads nearby and the horizontal one out. If your wool is tightly woven, this process might be deceptively difficult and time-consuming. My only suggestions are to do it a little bit at a time, and do your best to keep the vertical threads from tangling, since the fringe is both stylish AND period. To finish off your look, fasten your brat with a big decorative pin. (Although I personally prefer silver, a Celt most likely would have used gold.) You'll probably have to experiment with exactly how to wear your cloak and still be able to move without tripping, but at least you know you'll be warm...