



The Healing Ceremony of Decorating & Baking Your ClayPaws® Print*

By sending your print home unbaked and/or undecorated, your pet's care team is giving you the chance to honor your pet in your own way. Turning the process of decorating and baking your ClayPaws® print into a ceremony can be a healing experience for you and others who loved your pet.

You may not be ready to decorate or bake your ClayPaws® print right away. That's okay! Keep it in a cool, dry place away from direct sunlight. You may want to cover your print to protect it from dust and accidents during this time. When you're ready to bake, the instructions can be found below. *NOTE: To avoid cracking, we recommend baking your print within 4 weeks of it being made.*

Decorating Before Baking

When you are ready, take some time to think about what would be most comforting to you to have included on your pet's ClayPaws® print. What reminds you of their personality? Their favorite things? What symbols, dates, names, or words are important? You can write, stamp, or press items into the unbaked clay. Just be sure that whatever you press into the clay will withstand the temperatures necessary for baking. You can also poke holes in the clay to thread a ribbon through after baking.

Take time to thoughtfully decorate your print but be mindful it doesn't have to be perfect to be meaningful. Including children in this process is a great way to help them honor the life of their pet.



Baking Instructions

Your print must be baked for the impression to be permanent. Baking is easy. Simply follow the instructions below. But first, be sure you've decorated your print with anything that needs to be done before baking. *NOTE: Prints should always be baked in a well-ventilated oven and area. If your print is in a plastic bag, remove the plastic bag before baking.*

To Bake a ClayPaws® Print:

- **Preheat your oven or toaster oven to 275° F (135° C). (For altitudes above 5,000 feet, increase temperature to 295° F.)** Use a separate oven thermometer to be sure your oven's temperature is accurate.
- **Place your print in a clean, ungreased baking pan and place in your preheated oven or toaster oven to bake for 20 minutes.** The print will not look any different after it is baked properly. Baking simply "sets" the impression so it is permanently preserved. Do not bake in a microwave oven.
- **Remove the baking pan promptly from your oven and allow the print to cool to room temperature before touching.** Your print will continue to harden as it cools. After the print has cooled, gently work a spatula under the edge of the print to loosen. It's normal for your print to seem "stuck" to the dish but, once it is cooled, your print will easily "pop" loose. →

**The information found in this handout is exclusively meant to be used with genuine ClayPaws® Clay. If you have a question of whether your pet's care team used ClayPaws® Clay to make your print, please contact them.*

Continued...

Baking Ceremony

Baking your ClayPaws® print solidifies forever a symbol of the bond you will always share with your pet. The result is a tangible reminder of your love that can be touched, held, and treasured.

While your print bakes and cools, consider using the time to reflect on your pet and your life with them. You may want to:

- journal about your pet and how you're feeling.
- write a letter to your pet saying whatever you need to say to them.
- light a candle in their memory.
- gather other mementos that remind you of your pet and find a special place to keep them.
- look through pictures or watch videos of your pet.
- listen to music that comforts you or is meaningful to you.

Remember, it's okay to cry, scream, or yell. It's also okay to smile or laugh as you remember the good times. Grief is a process, and it is different for everyone. This is the beginning of your healing journey. It will be hard sometimes. If it gets too hard, reach out and ask for help. For a place to start, our website has many resources including a pet loss Facebook group, pet loss support lines to call and articles to read that may offer some comfort. Find all of this and more at www.veterinarywisdom.com/petparents

After your print is cool, take some time to admire the detail of the print. Can you see the familiar shape of your pet's toe pads, maybe a stray hair or dirt from the garden? This print is proof that your beloved pet existed and made an imprint on your world. Your bond, the love you shared, and your memories will endure. No matter what, that truth can never be taken away from you.



Decorating After Baking

After baking, you can finish your print as desired. You may like it how it is, or you may want to add ribbon or even paint or glaze your print. *NOTE: If you do decide to paint or glaze, please be mindful to use only 100% water-based acrylic paint OR a glaze intended for use on polymer clay like Sculpey® Gloss Glaze. Choose one or the other, do not glaze an already painted print or vice versa.*

The goal of decorating your print is not necessarily that it is designed well or looks professionally made. Instead, it is important that your print is comforting to you as a linking object. Linking objects are a tangible reminder of someone who has died and have been found to be very helpful to those who are grieving.

When you feel you're done decorating, find a special place to keep your print. Many people like to display their print in a place of honor, but others like to keep their print close—by their bedside, under their pillow, or in their car.

Remember, you can always change how and where you display your print. The unique thing about ClayPaws® prints is they are meant to be touched and held. Do whatever feels best to you in the moment.

For more information, visit the Veterinary Wisdom® Resource Center at www.veterinarywisdom.com

**The information found in this handout is exclusively meant to be used with genuine ClayPaws® Clay. If you have a question of whether your pet's care team used ClayPaws® Clay to make your print, please contact them.*