

## Perigord Spiral Basket – Judy Simmonds

‘Every time I sort groups of willow, first the thinnest rods for Celtic Knot platters, then 60 of the heaviest and 70 of the next heaviest for a Perigord spiral handled basket, excitement brews. I shall have to wait for soaking; but then I have the chance to make the best basket I’ve ever made. The spiral shape is wayward, perfection elusive, but the chase is on.’

The Perigord and Dordogne regions produce Jerusalem artichokes, potatoes, walnuts and mushrooms. The bottom rods of this agricultural 'potager' basket radiate like the spokes of a bicycle wheel, allowing dirt and stones to shake or rinse through after shaking or swishing in a pond or stream. The simple, overlocking technique has positions and movements similar to playing a violin and the shape is at once symmetrical and asymmetrical.

If asked why this strenuous and often dispiriting way of spending a day continues to beckon, I’d confess that I feel compelled to keep making, and hope that others see the same sculptural, intricate dependence of rod to rod, the endless slight variations in form, colour and proportions. After ten years of making tens of dozens of the ‘bouyricou’, ‘Perigordin’ or ‘French Spiral’, I feel I am nearly there. I’ll just soak another bundle to see if I can improve on that section just a little more.....

### **Course Overview**

After preparing our groups of rods, some ‘rehearsal’ willow will help in becoming familiar with the new hand movements and the base construction with the maker sitting at the center of a ten-foot diameter of radiating rods. Confidence in the base then leads to threading in more rods as the spiral sides rise, with intervals being judged by eye. The rhythm we started with continues until a double round finishes the rim. We then complete with an oval handle for an oval basket. Each maker will have their own pace and can decide how thoroughly to concentrate on each stage. I will be available in the evenings for those who wish to push on.

(Material cost £10-£15)



Photographer: Pauline Rook