

## TEA TOWELS

CS0045 By Rebecca Kemp Brent

Machine embroidery that mimics hand embroidered stitches gives a modern makeover to old fashioned tea towels. For a coordinating dresser scarf, see the January 2009 issue of *Sewing Savvy* magazine or go to [www.sewingsavvy.com](http://www.sewingsavvy.com).

### SUPPLIES:

- Coats Polyester Machine Embroidery threads
- Coats Bobbin thread
- Dual Duty XP All-Purpose thread
- 18" x 27" white cotton or linen tea towels
- Coordinating print and stripe fabrics\*
- Machine embroidery designs that mimic hand embroidery \*\*
- Heat- or water-soluble stabilizer for embroidery

\* Our samples use *Rambling Rose* by Dena Designs for Free Spirit Fabrics, #DF01, #DF02 and #DF07, all in the royal colorway. [www.freespiritfabric.com](http://www.freespiritfabric.com)

\*\* Our samples use LS\_HH10023ss and LS\_DH10007ss from Little Storehouse, [www.littlestorehouse.com](http://www.littlestorehouse.com)

### TOWEL WITH RUFFLE:

1. Cut a 33" x 5" strip of print fabric for the ruffle. Fold in half, lengthwise, right sides facing, and stitch the short ends in 1/4" seams.
2. Clip the corners, turn right side out, and press. Sew rows of gathering stitches 1/8" and 1/4" from the raw edge through both layers.
3. Lay the prepared band on the towel with the unfinished edge overlapping the towel hem 1/2". Pull the gathering stitches' bobbin threads to fit the band to the towel width. Adjust the gathers evenly across the towel. Baste close to the band raw edges.

*TIP: Dual Duty XP's exceptional strength makes it ideal for this gathering technique.*

4. Cut a 1 1/2" x 18" lengthwise strip from striped fabric, centering the strip on a stripe repeat. Adjust the strip width, if desired, to feature the fabric repeat.
5. Press under 1/2" on each short end of the strips, adjusting as necessary to fit the towel width. Press 1/4" to the wrong side along all long edges, being careful not to stretch the fabric.
6. Pin the prepared strip to the towel, overlapping the gathered band raw edge 1/4", so the gathering stitches are just covered. Edgestitch close to both long edges, securing the strip and the pleated band.
7. Mark an embroidery location along the towel centerline, 1 3/8" above the appliquéd strip. NOTE: This is the location for the motif's lower edge, not its center point.
8. Hoop the soluble stabilizer. Position the towel on the stabilizer and use the machine's basting function to secure the towel to the stabilizer. Alternatively, use an adhesive stabilizer or temporary adhesive spray to secure the towel for embroidery.

*TIP: To recreate the look of hand embroidery, the Little Storehouse designs use some longer than usual stitches. Loosen the needle thread tension for best results; you may also need to slow the machine speed.*

9. Stitch the embroidery motif. When embroidery is complete, remove the excess stabilizer. Lay the towel face down on a padded surface and press carefully from the wrong side.



### TOWEL WITH FABRIC STRIPS:

1. Cut a 5" x 18" lengthwise strip of striped fabric, centering a wide stripe on the strip. Press under 1/2" on each short end of the strip, adjusting as necessary to fit the towel width. Pin the fabric with its lower raw edge 2" above the towel edge.
2. Cut two bias strips of narrow stripe fabric 1" x 18". Press under 1/4" on each long edge to make 1/2"-wide bias binding.

*TIP: Use a bias tape folder to speed and simplify the operation.*

3. Pin a bias strip to the towel, overlapping the upper edge of the wide strip by 1/4", and pin. Turn the short ends to the wrong side, trimming as necessary, and tucking the ends under the bias strip. Edgestitch along both long edges of the bias strip.
4. Repeat Step 3 to attach the second bias strip to the wide stripe's lower edge.
5. Edgestitch along the towel side hems to secure the folded strip ends.
6. Mark an embroidery location along the towel centerline, 1/2" above the appliquéd strips. This will be the centerline for all the embroidered motifs. Make short vertical lines across the horizontal line at the towel center and every 3 3/8" from the center, for a total of five embroidery locations.
7. Hoop the soluble stabilizer. Position the towel on the stabilizer with the first embroidery location centered. Use the machine's basting function to secure the towel to the stabilizer. Alternatively, use an adhesive stabilizer or temporary adhesive spray to secure the towel for embroidery.

*TIP: If your machine has a continuous border hoop, use it to stitch a series of motifs above the appliquéd border.*

8. Stitch the embroidery motifs, rehooping as necessary. When embroidery is complete, remove the excess stabilizer. Lay the towel face down on a padded surface and press carefully from the wrong side.