



# Sparkling charm bracelet

Add metal clay charms to a simple silver wire bracelet or anklet this summer. **By Julia Rai**

**A**ward-winning artist Julia Rai runs the Metal Clay Academy website and teaches metal clay around the UK. She holds the prestigious Metal Clay Masters Registry credential at level four.

This sparkling silver chain bracelet requires no soldering, just basic wire bending. Julia shows you how to make two simple metal clay and polymer clay charms – an ice-cream cone and a cupcake, and a more challenging charm – a pair of flip-flops, perfect for a summer bracelet or anklet.



## MATERIALS

- 5-10g of silver metal clay
- Silver clay paste
- 60cm of 1mm Sterling silver wire
- 15cm of 1.5mm Sterling silver wire
- Polymer clay in a variety of colours
- Jumpings
- Citric acid (or safety pickle)
- Two-part moulding compound
- Roller and cards
- Clay shaper
- Cocktail stick
- Small needle files
- Small paintbrush
- Ball burnisher
- Clay shaper
- Pin tool
- Craft knife
- 1mm drill
- Sanding pads
- Tweezers
- Butane torch
- Pliers
- Tumble polisher or brass/steel brush
- Pebeo Vitrea 160 glass paint (optional)

## Designer tips

- Use Argentium silver wire for perfect ball ends as using Sterling silver can result in wrinkling.
- Practise making the loop links using cheap copper wire. Make them perfectly before working with silver.
- Use citric acid mixed with hot water as a safe and environmentally friendly alternative to acid for removing oxidization from Sterling silver.
- Make the flip-flops slightly larger for a great summery pendant. A single flip-flop would be fun or put them together as a pair.



### STEP 1

Cut the 1mm Sterling wire into 5cm lengths. For an 18cm bracelet, you will need approx. 12 pieces. Using tweezers, melt a ball on both ends of the wire. To do this turn your torch so the flame is pointing straight up and then bring the wire end down into the tip of the blue cone in the centre of the flame. Also ball up one end of the 1.5mm wire.



### STEP 2

Using round nose pliers, form a loop on each end of one wire link in opposite directions making an S-shape. The ball should make contact with the wire in the middle of the length, closing the S-ends. This is sometimes easier if you bend the loop beyond the wire and then ease it back using your fingers. Take another piece and form a closed loop on one end.

PHOTOGRAPHS: LAUREL GUILFOYLE, JULIA RAI



### STEP 3

Half form a loop on the other end and thread this through your first link. Close this loop up to form the second link in your chain. Continue until the chain is complete. Form the 1.5mm wire into an S-shaped hook, filing the cut end smooth. Attach this to the chain then place the chain into hot citric acid (or pickle) to remove the oxidization. Tumble or hand polish.



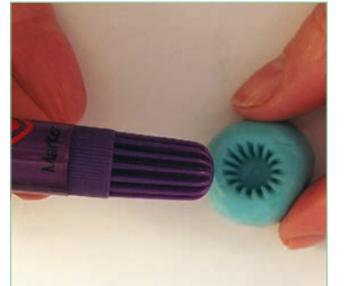
### STEP 4

To make the ice-cream cone charm, find a cone-shaped object about the right size – a cone-ended clay shaper is perfect. Lubricate with olive oil and make a rough cone shape around the form with a small patty of metal clay. Stick the join together with paste and smooth it with a clay shaper. Leave until the outside is dry then remove it carefully and dry the inside.



### STEP 5

Sand the open end of the cone until it is smooth. Using thick paste, apply a texture all over the outside of the cone with a cocktail stick. This texture can be simply straight or random lines or you can make it a random looped texture, cross-hatching or anything else you like. Apply this texture in stages so you can handle it without damaging your pattern. Dry it thoroughly.



### STEP 6

To make the cupcake, find something that has a serrated texture resembling a cake case, such as this marker-pen top. Make a mould of this using two-part moulding compound. Press a flat patty of metal clay about three cards thick into the mould and gently ease against the sides with a clay shaper. Leave it to dry and then gently flex the mould to pop the cake case out. ▶

## RESOURCES:

**Silver metal clay:** [www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk](http://www.bluebelldesignstudio.co.uk)  
**Polymer clay, two-part moulding compound and Pebeo Vitrea 160 glass paints:** [www.metalclay.co.uk](http://www.metalclay.co.uk)  
**Sterling silver wire:** [www.cooksongold.com](http://www.cooksongold.com)  
**Citric acid:** [www.meridianstar.co.uk](http://www.meridianstar.co.uk)

## CONTACT

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**STEP 7**

Using a small needle file, refine the very edges of the cupcake case so the grooves on the outside continue over the edge and down the inside of the case a little way. Sand the outside base until it is smooth. Hand-drill a hole in the dry cupcake case and the ice-cream cone for the jumpring using a 1mm drill. Put these aside ready for firing.



**STEP 8**

To make the flip-flops, roll out some silver clay to three cards thick and cut out two rough sole-shaped pieces using a sharp knife or pin tool. You can texture these if you want to or leave them plain. When they are dry, refine the shape, add texture with thick paste or sand the surfaces smooth. Roll out a thin snake of clay for the toe posts.



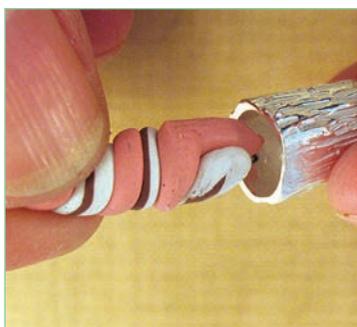
**STEP 9**

Cut two pieces from the clay snake, dry, sand then attach to the soles with paste. Roll out some clay two cards thick and cut thin strips for the flip-flop straps. Attach one strap at a time to each flip-flop using glass paste and dry. The straps must be very moist for this to work so keep the cut clay in cling film until you're ready to use it.



**STEP 10**

Attach the other strap, allow it to dry and carefully refine using sanding pads. Add texture or embellishment as desired. I have added small balls of clay and pushed a dip in each using a ball burnisher. I have also made some shell charms for the bracelet using the technique from my tutorial in MJ, issue 40. When all the charms are ready, fire them using a torch or in the kiln.



**STEP 11**

Polish all the charms and add a jumpring to each. To make the ice cream and cupcake filling, take different colours of polymer clay and condition each colour by kneading or using a pasta machine. Form slim snakes and twist different colours together. Pinch off enough to fill the cone and cupcake. Gently push them together making sure the opening of the jumpring isn't in the polymer clay.



**STEP 12**

Bake the cupcake and cone fillings in place, following the baking instructions for the polymer clay you used. When they are cool, check that the polymer fillings are secure and if not, use a little epoxy glue to stick them in. Use glass paint to add colour to the flip-flop embellishment if desired. Assemble the bracelet, spacing out the charms and making sure the jumprings are securely closed.

**Extra project Make earrings**

The cupcake or ice-cream cone would make great earrings. Make them in the same way as the charms and just add earwires.



**fashion inspiration**



Shell necklace, River Island



Ice Cream T-shirt, £20, ASOS



Flip Flops, £15, Fat Face