

Tilly's Corner: Knitting, Life, and the Brownies You're Not Getting the Recipe For

People always ask me about my knitting. They see the cardigans, the shawls, the socks that never wear out, and they want to know how I do it. Truth is, knitting's not a hobby for me — it's a way of keeping my hands busy and my heart steady. Some folks meditate. I knit. Same thing, only mine comes with colorwork and the occasional swear word when I drop a stitch.

I learned on the road, back when I was hauling freight across the country and needed something to keep me grounded between truck stops and thunderstorms. Yarn doesn't judge. Needles don't talk back. And a good pattern will get you through just about anything life throws at you. That's my philosophy: one stitch at a time, even when the row looks like a mess.

People also ask me for knitting advice, so here it is.

Use good yarn. Count your stitches. Don't knit angry. And if you do knit angry, at least switch to acrylic so you don't ruin the good stuff. And remember: mistakes aren't the end of the world. They're design features. Call it "intentional texture" and keep going.

Now, about the brownies.

Everyone wants that recipe. Everyone. I've had grown men try to bribe me with power tools. I've had women swear they'd take the secret to their graves if I'd just write it down. I've had RayRay offer me his firstborn, which is concerning because he doesn't have children and shouldn't be allowed to.

Let me be clear:

I will happily talk about my knitting until your ears fall off, but my baking recipes — especially the brownies — are going to the grave with me.

Not because I'm selfish. Because some things are meant to stay in the family. And because if everyone could make them, half the town wouldn't show up at my door pretending they "just happened to be in the neighborhood."

Baking, like knitting, is about love and patience. It's about knowing when to stir and when to leave things alone. It's about trusting the process even when the batter looks wrong or the yarn tangles itself into a knot that could qualify as a felony. Life's the same way. You keep going. You fix what you can. You let the rest rise on its own.

So if you want to talk knitting, pull up a chair. I'll pour the tea and show you the new pattern I'm working on. If you want a brownie, you can have one. If you want the recipe... well, sweetheart, you're out of luck.

Some secrets are sacred. And mine are baked at 350 degrees.

Tilly's Knitting Tips

Wisdom from a woman who's dropped more stitches than she'll ever admit.

1. Use Good Yarn

Life's too short for scratchy acrylic that squeaks like a mouse in a rainstorm. Treat yourself. Your hands deserve it.

2. Count Your Stitches

Every. Single. Row.

You think you don't need to? You do. Ask me how I know.

3. Don't Knit Angry

Your tension will be tighter than Lois during a town meeting. If you're mad, switch to dishcloth cotton until you calm down.

4. Mistakes Are "Design Features."

Dropped a stitch? Misread the chart? Congratulations, you've invented texture. Own it.

5. Block Your Work

Blocking is the difference between "homemade" and "handmade." Lois says it's like ironing your life choices. She's not wrong.

6. Keep Snacks Nearby

Knitting is hungry work. Brownies are ideal, but you're not getting the recipe, so manage with whatever you've got.

7. Always Have a Project Bag Ready

You never know when you'll be stuck waiting somewhere. A knitter without a project is a danger to themselves and others.

8. Knit for Love, Not Obligation

If someone demands a sweater, they're getting a hat. Maybe. If they're lucky.

9. Learn to Read Your Knitting

Patterns are suggestions. Your stitches tell the real story. Pay attention.

10. Enjoy the Process

Knitting, like life, is one stitch at a time. Some rows fly, some drag, some you rip out and redo. It all counts.

Tilly's Knitting Bag Essentials

If it's not in here, I probably don't need it — and if you do, that's your problem, sweetheart.

1. My Current Project

There's always one. Usually two. Sometimes three if I'm lying to myself. A woman needs options.

2. Wooden Needles Straight and Circular

The good ones. Warm in the hands, smooth as butter, and sturdy enough to double as a disciplinary tool if someone gets out of line.

3. A Notion Tin That Could Survive the Apocalypse

Inside you'll find:

- stitch markers
- tapestry needles
- a tape measure
- scissors sharp enough to scare Pete
- a row counter I forget to use
- and one emergency chocolate square (don't touch it)

4. A Spare Ball of Yarn

Because the minute you leave home without extra yarn, the universe punishes you. I don't make the rules.

5. A Pattern I Pretend I'm Following

Folded, crumpled, highlighted, and ignored. I read my knitting more than I read the paper.

6. A Pencil and a Tiny Notebook

For counting rows, jotting down ideas, and writing reminders like “RayRay owes me coffee” or “Tank borrowed my stitch markers again.”

7. Hand Lotion

Wool is lovely. Wool is also drying. I’m not walking around with hands like sandpaper.

8. A Snack

Usually something small. Sometimes a brownie.

No, you can’t have the recipe.

No, you can’t guess the ingredients.

Yes, I will take it to my grave.

9. A Crochet Hook

For rescuing dropped stitches and for poking people who talk to me while I’m counting.

10. A Project Bag That’s Seen Some Things

Sturdy, roomy, and covered in crumbs, yarn fuzz, and the faint smell of cinnamon. It’s not pretty, but it’s loyal — like the Posse, only quieter.



Tilly’s Rules for Knitting in Public

Because some people need guidance, and I’m tired of pretending otherwise.

1. Don’t Comment on My Yarn

If you say “That looks complicated,” I’ll smile.

If you say “My grandma used to do that,” I’ll nod.

If you say “Couldn’t you just buy a sweater?” I will stare at you until you evaporate.

2. Counting Is Sacred

If I’m counting out loud, do not speak to me.

Do not wave.

Do not breathe too loudly.

If you interrupt me, you are volunteering to weave in my ends.

3. Yes, I Can Knit and Listen

I can knit and talk.

I can knit and walk.

I can knit and solve your problems.

What I cannot do is knit and tolerate nonsense. Choose wisely.

4. No, You May Not Touch the Yarn

I don't care if it's "so soft."

I don't care if you "just want to feel it."

This is not a petting zoo.

5. Compliments Are Welcome

But keep them reasonable.

If you tell me you "could never do that," I'll tell you that you could — if you stopped scrolling long enough to try.

6. Do Not Offer Advice

Unless you knit.

And even then, tread lightly.

7. Snacks Are Encouraged

Knitting burns calories. Probably.

If you brought brownies, good for you.

If you want my brownies, that's adorable.

The recipe is still going to the grave with me.

8. Respect the Project Bag

It is not a purse.

It is not a curiosity.

It is a portable survival kit, and if you unzip it without permission, I will use a crochet hook in ways it was not designed for.

9. Ask Before Sitting Next to Me

I need elbow room.

I need light.

I need to not be squished between you and someone eating nachos.

10. Enjoy Yourself

Knitting in public is a small act of peace in a loud world.

If you want to join me, sit down.

If you want to learn, I'll teach you.

If you want the brownie recipe... sweetheart, that's never happening.