

ORDER UP!

BENJAMIN DOVER SERVES UP A VINTAGE BLUE PLATE SPECIAL

I was lucky to have a dad who instilled in me his love of building models at a very young age. We all have wonderful memories of building models when we were kids, but my memories were extra special because I built them with my dad, who was also an avid builder and collector in his day.

When Dad passed away, I was fortunate to not only inherit his love of modeling but also his substantial kit stash. Both of our interests in building were rather eclectic, in that we built practically everything. At least I thought so until I went through his stash and found an old kit at the bottom of the box. The kit was by Life-Like and it was called the 'Blue Plate Special #1'. Up until this point, I thought I had seen it all, but what I found was a 1/1 scale model of a meatloaf dinner complete with baked potato and peas!

The kit contained 4-part trees containing 27 parts, including a small plastic dinner plate, with 16 of the parts consisting of the top and bottom of the peas, and a one-piece part containing 19 peas that formed a base upon which the other peas would later be stacked. The slice of meatloaf was made up of 2 parts that attached side by side, with the top side textured to represent meatloaf and the underside hollow. The potato was three parts: a left and right side and a slab of butter part that fit between a gap on top. For the life of me, I had no



Life-Like "Blue Plate Special #1" series box.

idea why they would make such a model, and even more perplexing, as to who would actually buy it. I guess if my dad were still alive, he would be able to answer that question.

From the appearance of the box art and instructions, I would guess that this kit came out in the late 50's or early 60's when manufacturers were experimenting with all sorts of subject matter. So far, my research has turned up nothing about this kit.



Here you can see the basic components. Note there are no connector pins or tabs to align the parts.



Individual peas were molded as two half sections. The plate came on a separate sprue molded in white.



The meatloaf halves required extensive clean up with a hobby knife.

I started by cleaning the parts, which were full of flash and ejector marks. I am not an expert at building old kits, but both the meatloaf and potato were slightly warped and would require a lot of putty and CA fillers to get them to match up. The peas were semi-hollow spheres, and each one had to be glued together to make 21 total individual peas.

Starting with the meatloaf, I sanded the left and right sides to get them to match up as best as possible before gluing them together with liquid cement. I reinforced the inside seam with a strip of Evergreen Plastic Strip and CA glue to lock it together. I now had an oval slice of meatloaf about 5 1/2 inches long by 3 inches wide. The seam along the top was pronounced, so I filled in what I could with CA filler. To enhance the meat texture, I stippled on Mr. Hobby Dissolved Putty with a stiff brush, and once dried, I sanded down the rough edges. The potato, with its odd shape, took a lot more sanding and pressing into place. It too had a semi-hollow bottom that would sit on the plate. I used the same construction and filling method as the meatloaf, but no matter what I did, the slab of butter would just fall through the top with nothing to hold on to. This required some scratch building of the interior of the potato using plastic styrene sheet-stock to close the hole and give the butter something to sit on. I then glued the butter to the top and filled in around it with 2-part Magic Sculpt sculpting clay.



The base section of the peas were molded with extensive flash which needed to be carefully removed.

The peas required a lot of sanding along the seam, which was frustrating because of their small shape and size. No matter how hard I tried to hold on, these things were constantly flying around the room, bouncing everywhere, and hiding in corners around my workbench. I spent more time on my knees searching for these things than actually sanding them.

With all the components now complete, it was now time to paint and assemble them to the plate. The white plate looked rather realistic, so I decided not to paint it. The meatloaf, potato, and peas were then painted separately, weathered, and detailed before placing them on the plate. I started by airbrushing the meatloaf with a combination Tamiya Flat Brown mixed with Flat Black. I hope my wife doesn't read this, but her meatloaf always looks a little brown and greyish in color. The potato was airbrushed in a splotchy pattern with a combination of Tamiya XF-49 Khaki and XF-55 Deck Tan with a drop of XF-68 Nato Brown. To simulate the melting butter, I used AK Still Water with a few drops of Tamiya Yellow, of which I let run over the top and drip along the side. I increased the curing process with a hairdryer.

The peas took over an hour to stack and glue each one on top of the other to form a little pile. They were then airbrushed with Tamiya XF-5 Flat Green.



Mr. Hobby Dissolved Putty was stippled onto the completed meatloaf sub-assembly to create additional texture.



The square opening for the slab of butter is much too large and will require support from underneath.

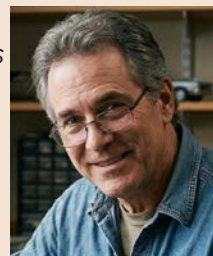
The meatloaf and potato were then pin-washed with Burnt Umber artist oils to bring out the detail. I used Tamiya aircraft panel liner to accent all the individual peas. When everything was thoroughly dried, I went back and dry-brushed all the highlights using the base colors with a touch of white.

I then assembled all the components on the plate and glued them into place. Although they looked ultra-realistic, they also looked a little dry, so I lightly brushed on some Pledge floor wax to give them a realistic and delicious sheen. I must admit that by the time I was done with the model, my mouth was watering for meatloaf. Even my wife's meatloaf would have sufficed.

I don't know if you're a fan of meatloaf or you just like building models outside your comfort (and dietary) zone, but I would suggest you try and find one of these interesting kits. I should note that two other kits in this series appear on the side of the

box, one called 'The Chow Wagon' consisting of a hamburger and french fries, and the other labeled 'American Breakfast', consisting of two sunny-side fried eggs, bacon, and home fries. They look just as delish!

Ben has been building models since he was a little boy, but admits that his passion for plastic really took off while being incarcerated as a guest of the State of Indiana, where models were offered as part of their recreation program. Once released, the very first thing he did was build a first-class workshop where he learned the joys of airbrushing. He lives now with his wife and daughter and owns a consulting business that specializes in preventing data breaches and corporate security.



Ben duplicated the washed out coloring of his wife's meatloaf... just don't tell her!