

How to make a fukuro-yari

For people coming to the training event with Doug Wilson Shihan next weekend, I thought it would be helpful to post a guide to making a training yari. To be clear, not everyone will need one and there will be some available for sale cheaply on the day, but these are very cheap and easy to make so there's no reason why you can't make one for yourself.



This method of making a training weapon is only really suitable for yari - the 'hardwood' dowel that is commonly sold in Irish hardware stores isn't really suitable for making rokushakubo or hanbo as it is too light and brittle and breaks too easily. You need a decent wood for a bo, but yari don't take strain in the same way as bo, so you can use a lighter wood.

Here's how the finished weapons look. In the picture to the left, Matthew Harvey is holding two different yari of varying lengths. (Historically, yari ranged in length from the te-yari, a hand held throwing weapon that looks more like an arrow than a spear, right up to extremely long weapons measuring 20 feet long and more.

To make your yari, you'll need:

- 1 x piece of hardwood dowel, available from any large DIY retailer**
- 1 x piece of foam pipe insulation**
- 1 x roll of duct tape**

The first thing you'll probably need to do is give the piece of dowel a light sanding - while they are sold reasonably well finished, you don't want any burrs or splinters as you will be sliding this through your hands. So sand it first, and then get to work on the padding.

Traditionally yari have a blade at one end (obviously) but less obvious is the counterweighted ishizaki at the other end. Historically, some yari had short blades and some long, and the heavier the blade, the more it becomes necessary to counterweight the weapon so that it can be moved easily. This counterweight is sometime used in the Kukishin Ryu spear kata we practice to strike the opponent's knees, ankles, elbows hands and feet, so you need to pad this.

To do this, cut your insulation into two pieces, one about five or six inches and the other as long as you'd like the blade to be. Take the shorter piece and cut four times into the top (*See pic one*), to a depth of around two inches. Next fold two sections inside the tube, to leave two sticking up, as shown in *pic two*.



Step one



Step two



Step three



Step four



Step five

Next, insert the pole into the insulation, until it meets the ends of the folded up tabs inside the tube (*see pic three*). This can be quite hard -- you want a snug fit and it can take a bit of work. Fold the two remaining tabs in to create a blunt point and use a piece of tape to secure it in position (*pic four*). Then to finish it, just wrap it up in tape (*pic five*).

Bingo, one padded ishizaki. The main blade section of the weapon is made in exactly the same way - just with a longer padded section. It's really simple, and only takes around 15 minutes from start to finish, and costs around €20. Less if you share duct tape with someone else. The only tip I have for people making these is to make sure that you pay attention to the functionality of the padding at the tip - it needs to be solid to be useful but thrusting with a yari can be painful, so it also needs to be padded.