

A Braid to Make: Double-Rai Gumi

A doubling of the Yatsu Rai gumi

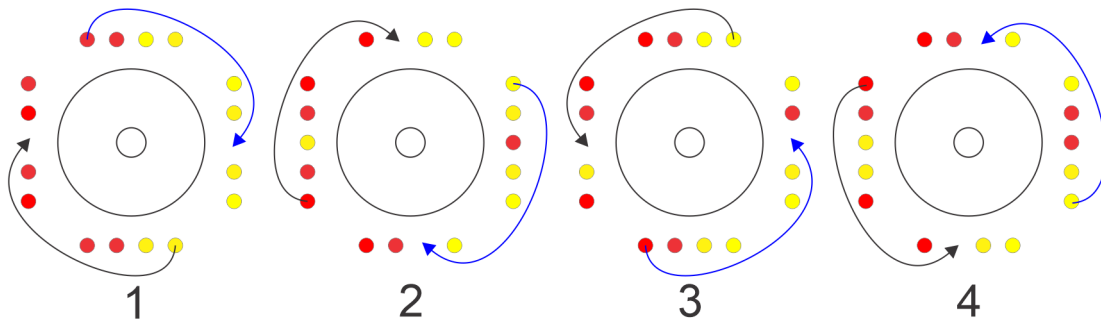
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It always bothered me that while most of the 16-strand marudai braids in [Jacqui Carey's Creative Kumihimo](#) are expansions of some of the 8-strand marudai braids in the same book, there was no doubling of the "8J" (p. 42) *Yatsu Sen* pattern. 8J is one of my favorite 8-strand patterns to braid, and I find the *Yatsu Rai* colorway (XO OO OX XX) to be pleasing. I decided to figure out what a good "Double Rai" pattern would be.

The 16-strand braids that are doubled 8-strand braids are usually either two 8-strand braids braided "next to" each other, or two 8-strand braids braided "on top of" each other. The braids that are braided on top of each other often expand the starting arrangement from "four groups of two" to "four groups of four". Then, they use the same four steps as the 8-strand to work first one set of 8 strands, then the other set. This is how the 16-strand *Keiruko no Himo* (16T) *gumi* doubles the 8-strand *Edo Yatsu* (8F) *gumi*.

I decided to try the following pattern:



This created a wonderful braid with an unusual cross-section and a pleasant texture. The braid is not flat like the *Yatsu Sen gumi*, but has an oblong cross-section. The edges are flat, and the faces are rounded. The long sweeping stitches along the edges contrast with the tight stitches in the center.

I should note here that trying to double the braid by starting with "eight groups of two" (how the 16-strand *Naiki* (16N) *gumi* doubles the *Edo Yatsu* (8F) *gumi*) did not work for me **at all** on the marudai. It's possible that additional tightening moves or a different balance of weight might yield success, but I have not yet tried.

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For my example braid, I measured out a 54 inch (134 cm) warp with 6 ends of #10 cotton crochet thread per strand. I do a lot of my experimentation and teaching with crochet thread since it is colorful and available, and can help students get used to measuring multi-thread strands with a material that is less finicky and more affordable than silk. Six ends per strand created a braid that is 5/8 inch wide (16 mm) and about 1/4 inch (12 mm) thick. The braid is about 34 inches (86.5 cm) long between the bindings.

I do most of my braids in two colors, with half the strands in each color. Starting with a “left and right” colorway (XXOO OOOO OOOX XXXX) in contrasting colors (shown above in step 1) did not create the “lightning bolt” patterns seen in the *Yatsu Rai gumi*, but it did create long zig-zags of color.

This is a fairly heavy braid for me, but I wanted to be able to use it as a lanyard and I have found that a heavier braid does not dig into the back of my neck as much as a thin braid. Most cords that I do in crochet thread use only 4 ends of thread per strand. Towards the goal of lanyard, I started the braid on a small carabiner, and worked a 10 mm jump ring into the end, just before the short tassel.



Other simple two-hue colorways for this braid include:

- “top and bottom” (OOOO OOOX XXXX XXOO) – hounds-tooth weave
- “inside and out” (OXXO OXXO OXXO OXXO) – zig-zag “rings” of color
- “deasil and widdershins” (OOXX OOXX OOXX OOXX) – long stripes of color

Although I worked out this pattern on my own, subsequent research on the Internet revealed that I am not the first to experiment with this structure, and not the first to admire it. I salute my fellow travelers!

Elliott C. Evans is a technical writer and trainer in Pittsburgh PA, USA. He has been studying kumihimo since 2008. At [Braids 2025](#) in Cleveland, he will be teaching a class on braids that use an odd number of tama. Follow Elliott’s adventures on his blog at ee0r.com/blog/ . Jacqui Carey will also be teaching at Braids 2025, and her book **Creative Kumihimo** is available on the Braid Society web site at thebraidsociety.wildapricot.org/Books .