Without a spare month to spend learning Italian in Rome from a handsome young man over plates of spaghetti and glasses of wine, perhaps these placemats can serve a starting point. We used the signature *Multi Blocks Italino* fabric from the new Michael Miller collection, *Alfabeto Italiano Collezione*. The fabric features elaborately illustrated 4” x 4” alphabet blocks in wonderful vintage colors. Why in just the short time it took to make two placemats, I've already learned that "L" is for *lanterna* (lantern), *lepre* (rabbit) and *libri* (books). My impressive vocabulary will undoubtedly come in handy as soon as I step off the plane in Italy and need to locate "books on hunting rabbits by lantern light."

This stunning new fabric collection from our friends at Michael Miller Fabrics: *Alfabeto Italiano Collezione* is available online and in stores now.

The *Multi Blocks Italino*, which we used for the front of our placemats, literally cries out (in Italian) to be ‘fussy cut.’ This technique of exact cutting is really what creates the beauty of these placemats. If you are new to the technique, be aware fussy cutting has nothing whatsoever to do with crying in the barber chair after a particularly bad haircut. Learn more about it in our article, *How to Fussy Cut*.
The yardage shown below is for TWO placemats at a finished size of 13½" x 18½". Multiply as needed to make enough for the whole extended family.

**Sewing Tools You Need**

- Any Sewing Machine (we recommend the Janome Jem Platinum 760)
- ¼" Seam foot, optional

**Fabric and Other Supplies**

- 1½ yard of 44-45" wide fabric for the front of both placemats (the center panels and the border strips) we used Alfabeto Italiano Collezione from Michael Miller Fabrics in Multi Blocks Italiano
- 3/8 yard of 44-45" wide fabric for the back center panel of one placemat we used Alfabeto Italiano Collezione from Michael Miller Fabrics in Parole Cream
- 3/8 yard of 44-45" wide fabric for the back center panel of the other placemat we used Alfabeto Italiano Collezione from
Michael Miller Fabrics in Parole Black
- ¼ yard of 44-45" wide fabric for the border strips on the back of both placemats we used Alfabeto Italiano Collezione from Michael Miller Fabrics in Mustard Cha Cha Stripe
- ½ yard of craft fleece or low-loft batting
- 2 packages (three yards per package) of extra wide double fold bias tape: we used dark red
- All purpose thread to match or contrast with your fabric: we used red thread to contrast with our fabric and match our binding
- Scissors or rotary cutter and cutting mat
- Fabric pen, pencil or chalk
- See-through ruler
- Seam gauge
- Straight pins
- Ironing board and iron

Getting Started

1. From the fabric for the front center panels (Multi Blocks Italiano in our sample), fussy cut a piece two squares high by four squares wide (approximately 9½" x 19" if you use a different fabric). You can follow the dotted lines printed on the fabric if you use the Multi Blocks Italiano.

![Hand holding scissors over fabric](image)

2. Also from the fabric for the front, fussy cut four border strips. With the Multi Blocks Italiano we used in our sample, we can again simply follow the dotted lines on the fabric to cut these borders. If you are using a different fabric, cut four strips approximately 3" x 22".

3. Measure the center panels and cut a matching rectangle from the fabric(s) you've selected for the back center panels (approximately 9½" x 19"). We used Parole Cream and Parole Black.

4. From the fabric for the back border strips (Cha Cha Stripe in our sample), cut two 3" x Width of Fabric strips. Cut each strip in half to yield four strips.
   
   **NOTE:** When making these placemats, because of the fussy cutting there is likely to be leftover fabric. This would be great for making matching Italiano napkins. If using the Multi Blocks Italiano, use the leftover 4 x 4 alphabet blocks to build cool patchwork napkins.

5. Cut two 15" x 20" rectangles from the craft fleece.
   
   **NOTE:** Yes, these fleece pieces are oversized. Not to worry, they will be trimmed to fit during construction.

At Your Sewing Machine

1. Place the front center panel in the middle of the craft fleece. Pin the upper and lower edges.
2. Place a border strip, right sides together, along the top and bottom of the front center panel, matching the raw edges of the fabric. Pin in place.

NOTE: If using a directional print as we did, adjust the position of the borders so the designs are staggered, and make sure the designs are upside down when pinned so they will be right side up when pressed up into place.

3. Using a a ¼" seam, stitch along the top edge and the bottom edge through all layers.

4. Remove the pins and lightly press as sewn; do NOT press the border strips up into place yet.

5. Trim the excess border fabric even with the edges of the craft fleece.

6. Place the front face down on your work surface. When turning it over, make sure what will be the top front of
placemat is still at the top as you are looking at the piece on your work surface.

7. There will be two lines of stitching visible on this back side of the craft fleece. Center a back center panel, right side up, over the craft fleece, covering the lines of stitching by ¼" top and bottom.

8. Place a back border strip along the top and bottom of the back center panel, right sides together. Pin in place through all layers.

   NOTE: Don’t worry about how the ends are not matching the craft fleece. Remember, we’ll trim everything before we bind the placemats.

9. Turn the whole placemat back over to the front side.

10. Stitch from the front side, along the top and bottom, through all the layers (front and back and fleece), following right along the previous lines of stitching.
11. Remove pins and press lightly as sewn.

12. Then, with the front still facing up, press the border strips up and away from the center panel.

13. Turn the placemat over and press the back border strips up and away from the center panel.

14. Turn the placemat back over again to the front, and topstitch along the top and bottom, staying approximately ¼” from the border strip/center panel seam with your stitching on the border strip.

15. Add four additional lines of topstitching to quilt the placemat layers.

16. On our Multi Blocks Italiano, we simply followed the dotted lines between the pretty blocks. If you choose a different fabric, space three vertical lines of stitching across the placemat (approximately every 4½”), stitching from border strip to border strip. Then stitch horizontally across the exact center of the placemat.

17. When all the stitching is complete, trim the placemat to the width of the front (approximately 19½”). Then trim the excess fabric and fleece top and bottom to match the height of the front (approximately 14½”). See... I told you we’d finally trim it all up.

NOTE: This trimming is most easily and accurately done with a see-through ruler and rotary cutter.
18. Bind the entire placemat with bias tape, mitering at the corners.

French binding

1. We used a technique called French binding, which is likely to be well-known to those of you who quilt.
2. Unfold the bias tape then refold it just once in half.
3. Press to remove the unnecessary fold lines.
4. Working from the front of placemat, and starting in the middle of one side, align the raw edges of the folded and pressed bias tape to the raw edge of the placemat.
5. Sew in place using a ¼” seam.
6. Miter each corner. To do this, stop with the needle in the down position when you are ¼" from the corner.

7. Pivot the fabric 90°.

8. Using the reverse button on the machine, back off the fabric.

9. Turn the bias binding straight down at a 90° angle. This will create a 45° fold to the inside of the corner, and allow you to align the raw edge of the binding with the raw edge of the next side of the placemat. Re-start stitching at the point of the fold.
10. Overlap to the bias tape to finish.
11. Fold the stitched binding to the back side of the placemat, covering the line of stitching. Press in place and pin as needed.
12. Topstitch the binding in place from the front side all the way around.

Hints and Tips

For more help with bias tape and binding methods, take a look at one or both of these tutorials:

Bias Tape: How To Make It & Attach It
How to Make Faux Mitered Corners

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