

Woodwares make perfect gifts for Dad

Father's Day means cingular woodworking at the Saturday Market

by Louie Opatz

June means Father's Day and, for many sons and daughters, Father's Day means frantically trying to chase down a last-minute gift for Dad. Though Dad may not admit to wanting something special, make his 2013 Father's Day a memorable one by stopping at the Portland Saturday Market for a well-chosen, last-minute gift.

Portland Saturday Market boasts unique wares for all stripes and seasons, but Father's Day is the perfect time to patronize the market's many distinct, hand-crafted woodwares. Vendors like Erik Swenson, Ajja Woodworks, Bengston Woodworks, Visions in Wood, Uli Kirchler Vince Nance produce one-of-a-kind items that make for perfect Father's Day gifts.

Nance, for one, feels like woodworking has always been a part of him.

"I think there's a gene for it," he said. Nance "grew up cutting firewood with [his] grandfather" before embracing woodturning as a hobby. And, after years of woodturning for fun, Nance's hobby blossomed into something more.

"It was the case of a hobby turning into a business," he said.

Uli Kirchler, who specializes in repurposing recycled and reclaimed wood into wooden sculptures, has also carved out a bustling business at the Saturday Market after traveling around selling his pieces at art festivals across the country.

"Overhead and traveling--my expenses were too high," Kirchler said of his time at various festivals. "The Saturday Market was my last way out. I decided I'd give it a try, really my last chance."

Kirchler joined the market in the fall of 2008, and he stuck with the market even after the first few months were slow; he's now thriving.

"The last three years, I've never done so well my entire life," Kirchler said. "I gave up all my other shows. [The market's] really the only thing that I'm focusing on. It was my saving. It turned my life around for me."

Like Nance, Kirchler also thinks that certain people just have an innate connection with woodworking--and that often those people are men.

“Men do connect a lot with my work,” Kirchler said. “I don’t know what it is. I don’t know if I get to do the projects that men dream of.

“I have a lot of male customers,” Kirchler continued. “I don’t know if it’s a stereotype. Men play outdoors with trees. Maybe there’s something to it.”

Kirchler’s bowls, vases and artistic wall pieces all would make impressive additions to any father’s den or living room.

Like Kirchler, woodworker Mike Ferreira of Visions in Wood finds that--perhaps surprisingly--men are often equally attracted to his wooden wares, specifically his vases.

“I always thought women would be most attracted to vases over men--you know, vases are kind of feminine in nature,” Ferreira said. “Well, it seems like men like them and buy them just as much as the women. [The art] appeals to both sexes and it appeals to every kind of person, crosses all the boundaries.”

Ferreira recalled a specific instance where he sold a vase to a wife for her husband’s Father’s Day present, and expects to sell more Father’s Day gifts this year as the holiday fast approaches.

This year, “I did sell little treasure boxes for people looking for Father’s Day presents,” Ferreira said. “They range from about 20 bucks to about 50 bucks,” and are a complementary addition to Dad’s desk or end table.

Stop by the market this Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. to find the perfect last-minute gift for your father--whether it’s wood or not.