



Esther Kruser makes 12 different styles of dolls and 10 different styles of flowers from husks and silk.

THEY'RE FAST-SELLING ITEMS AT ART AND CRAFT FAIRS

She Crafts Dolls And Flowers From Cornhusks

By Jim Massey

Esther Kruser, Hazel Green, Wis., has a hard time keeping up with the demand for the unusual products she hand-crafts from cornhusks and silk products including dolls, wreathes and flowers.

Kruser, who displays and sells her wares at art and craft fairs, specializes in finely-detailed cornhusk dolls and realistic, multi-colored flowers. She makes 12 different styles of dolls and 10 different styles of flowers. She gets most of the husks and silk she needs from an acre of corn.

The hobby has become a full-time job for Kruser, now that she has a growing market for her products. During fall, she works from 6 a.m. until nearly midnight to craft enough dolls, wreathes, floral arrangements and other creations to sell at fall and winter craft shows. She can sell all the products she can make by attending only five shows a year.

Kruser creates her own designs, and rarely makes anything the same way twice. She wants each doll to be unique, so she tries to do something a little different each time she makes one. She never follows a pattern.

Now that her hobby has become a successful business venture, Kruser needs the help of her husband to get the job done. His main responsibility is dyeing the cornhusks into the 17 different colors used in her creations.

"Cletus also collects the little vines that we use for our heart wreathes, and puts them on a heart form and bakes them in the oven," says Kruser. "I definitely wouldn't be able to put out as many items if he wasn't help-

ing."

One unique feature of the dolls is that everything is sewn with cornhusk thread which Kruser says is unbelievably strong. To make it, she simply tears off thin strips of cornhusks.

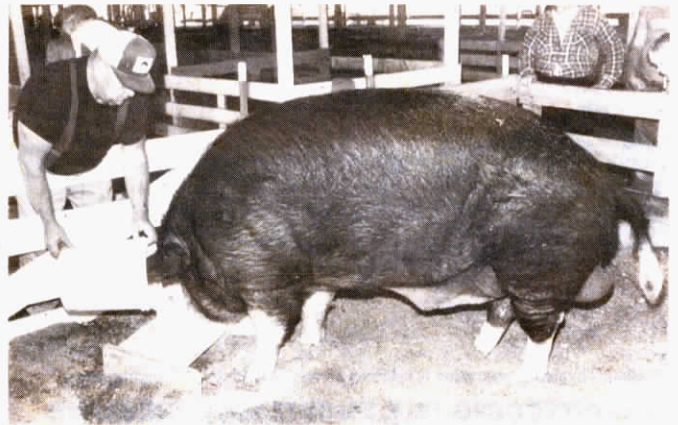
"People have really noticed that aspect of my products," she says. "Almost everything on the dolls is cornhusk. Some people put styrofoam cones inside the bases of their dolls, but I use only cornhusks in there, too. I even use corn silk for the dolls' hair."

The dolls range in price from \$15.95 for miniatures to \$45 for her most elaborate creations. She says it's difficult to estimate how long it takes to make a doll, because there is so much variance in detail between each item. But including collecting the husks, dyeing them, cutting and putting everything together, she says it probably takes four or five hours to make an average doll.

Kruser says that although cornhuskery is beginning to make a comeback as a craft, she doesn't expect lots of people to begin doing it. "It has come back somewhat for those who have the time, but it's certainly not for everybody. I couldn't do it if I had my children at home. You need lots of time and also some creative ability."

For more information, contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Mrs. Esther Kruser, Rt. 1, Box 275, Hazel Green, Wis. 53811 (ph 608 748-4676).

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Chief now weighs 1,230 lbs. and is 9 ft. long, 4 ft. tall, and 8 ft. around.

1,230-LB. HOG'S FAVORITE FOOD IS JELLO

He's Trying To Raise The World's Largest Hog

He drinks a 6-pack of beer and eats 30 lbs. or more of food a day but Chief, a big 1,230-lb., 7-year-old Berkshire boar owned by hog producer Bob Corbett, North Lewisburg, Ohio is still not the world's biggest hog.

Corbett won notoriety last year for his giant hog when the animal was awarded the "Biggest Boar" title at the Indiana State Fair. Shortly after the fair he appeared on the David Letterman TV show and started receiving requests for personal appearances at shopping malls, grand openings, parades and other events. "There's been tremendous interest in Chief but he's still not big enough to make the Guinness Book of World Records," says Corbett, who has adopted an unusual "health food" diet for the hog that includes such diverse products as grain, beer, cherry jello and gum drops.

"I knew he was going to be a big one when he was born. He was one of a litter of 11 and had big bones and wrinkly skin. At 6 months he weighed 300 lbs. - 75 lbs. more than the other pigs in his litter - and at the end of the first year he weighed 590 lbs.," says Corbett.

In past attempts at producing a record-size hog, Corbett had done everything he could to fatten up the animal with molasses and other sugary or fatty foods. The problem was that the hogs would get so fat their stomachs dragged the ground. Because they weren't healthy, their life expectancy was shortened.

This time he decided to use body building diets, observed by professional weight lift-

ers, to build Chief up more gradually. Each day the hog is fed ground oats, barley, bran and turnips. He's also given vitamin supplements, including iron, Vitamins B and E, and others. His favorite food is cherry jello (it's high in protein), and about the only unhealthy food he receives is red or orange gumdrops (he turns up his nose at green or yellow ones). He also gets an average of about a 6-pack of beer a day, primarily to thin his blood, according to Corbett.

Chief also gets exercise. Corbett walks him 1/4 to 1/2 mile each day. And the big hog goes to the doctor regularly, too, for X-rays to check fat buildup around his heart and lungs.

Chief now is 9 ft. long, 4 ft. tall and 8 ft. around. Last summer he got up to 1,322 lbs. before the heat wave hit and he lost weight. Although the Guinness Book of World Records lists a 2,500-lb. hog as the all-time biggest, Corbett says the biggest "modern" hog - raised since the 1940's, when larded hogs were demanded by the market - is a 1,338 lb. hog raised in 1977 in Nebraska. He hopes Chief passes that weight later this year and moves on up higher. Meanwhile he collects a \$700 fee for personal appearances. Signs at all the entrances to North Lewisburg, a town of 1,200 people, tell anyone driving through that it's the home of Chief.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Bob Corbett, 4495 Corbett Rd., North Lewisburg, Ohio 43060 (ph 513 747-3448).

"GREAT FOR WATCHING TV"

Bucket Seats For Kids Made From Plastic Pails

"Kids love them — especially for watching TV," says Rich Den Hartog of the bucket seats he makes out of plastic 5 gal. pails. His wife Ann decorates them with contact paper.

"With girls, the most popular decal is Raggedy Ann or Sunbonnet girl," she points out. "Boys generally go for bears, Superman, airplanes or clowns."

The cushioned seat (available in your choice of cotton, nagahyde or upholstery) is

part of a self-contained 3-legged stool which is placed inside the plastic pail and secured with three screws, one per leg, which run through the bottom of the pail and up into each leg.

The Den Hartogs sell their unique bucket seats, made from brand new white plastic pails, for \$16 each, plus \$5 for shipping.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Rich and Ann Den Hartog, 903 E. 8th St., Holland, Mich. 49423 (ph 616 396-5182).

