

## Coffin Couches Offer Eternal Comfort Here On Earth

A couch made of a coffin wouldn't fit every home's decor. But Vidal Herrera has discovered that many folks will fork over \$3,500 or more for his unusual furnishings.

Herrera is a retired deputy medical investigator in East Los Angeles who owns a private business that performs 750 post-mortem procedures annually. Secondly, he runs MorguePropRentals.com, renting autopsy tables and other equipment seen on television series such as *Body of Proof* and *Hawaii Five-O*, as well as in movies.

It was after the champagne flowed at an after-movie party that a set director asked Herrera if he could make her a coffin couch. He played along and said he could, but didn't take her seriously until she called a couple weeks later and asked if it was finished.

Four years later, www.coffincouches.com continues to receive orders from all over the U.S. and the world including Korea, Germany and Japan. He purchases coffins that can't be sold because they have minor damage such as scratches and dents after being shipped by container from China.

He creates each design based on customer tastes and relies on several neighbors to do the welding, carpentry and upholstery and painting to finish them.

"We remove the lid, and use them as window awnings," he explains. "Then the front is cut off, and all of the padding is removed."

A steel frame is welded to the bottom to support up to 900 lbs. Padding and upholstery are tacked to a plywood frame that is placed inside. Steel legs are bolted to the underside.

Many designs include Harley-Davidson, sports teams or business logos. The coffin furniture appeals to people who like tattoos and motorcycles, as well as folks just looking for unique pieces. For example, the White Knight Cow couch was designed for a former Iowa native who now lives in L.A.

"The pink one is very popular with the ladies," he adds, noting he's sold couches to beauty salons and a fortune-teller.

Pin striping, embroidery and silver or chrome-plating are just a few of the options Herrera has included on the customized couches.

"We will be offering matching coffee



Customized "cow couch" was designed for a former Iowa native who now lives in Los Angeles.



Coffin's lid is removed, the front cut off, and a steel frame welded on bottom. Padding and upholstery are tacked to a plywood frame, and steel legs bolted on.

tables, end tables and recycled embalming machines to be used as lamps," he adds.

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## Camelina Oil Competes With Olive And Flaxseed Oil

Camelina oil is an American-grown alternative to olive oil. A Minnesota family is among a few small businesses in the country who grow and process camelina and say it's actually a healthier choice than other oils.

With twice as many Omega 3's as Omega 6's, it's more nutritious than other cold-pressed oils. And, loaded with Vitamin E antioxidants, camelina has a much longer shelf life than flaxseed oil, its closest nutritional competitor. Camelina oil stays stable for as long as two years without going rancid.

Phil Batalden was impressed by the oil's nutritional makeup. So 3 years ago when his daughter, Kathleen Batalden Smith, and her husband, Justin Smith, returned to the farm, he asked them, "If I grow it, will you sell it?"

After going through a learning curve, and some unusual weather, they successfully grew camelina seed, and the young couple started promoting their oil in 2012. "We sell

it on our website, in 20 stores in and around Minnesota, and we are expanding to the West Coast," Batalden Smith says. "The feedback we've gotten is good."

The 8 1/2-oz. bottles sell for \$12.99, and the oil can be used for all types of baking and cooking.

"It's a bright gold oil that's quite beautiful to look at," Batalden Smith says, adding it has a high smoke point (450 degrees). It works equally well for sautéing and roasting vegetables and in salad dressings and baking. The website even includes information about using the oil for skin and hair care.

She and her husband developed the Omega Maiden Oils logo and run the business, from filling bottles to marketing to shipping. Currently another organic processor presses the oil for them.

Camelina seeds net about 30 percent of their weight in oil, and leftover meal (high in protein) is fed to the farm's cattle.

Batalden Smith says her father planted 40 acres of camelina seed this year. He likes



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how it fits in with his crop rotation and that it's drought resistant and a competitive weed suppressor. Typically the grain is swathed in mid July and combined with a pickup head. Camelina requires few inputs and fits well in the organic farm's plan for sustainability.

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Camelina oil is sold in 8 1/2-oz. bottles and can be used for all types of baking and cooking.

## She's Turning Rocks Into Money

Old, worn farm discs find new purpose in Jean Krufft's Rock Spring Fountains.

"I provide all the parts. The customer puts it together and adds the rocks," says the owner of the Wigwam gift shop in Lake George, Minn. Once owned by professional wrestler "Baron" von Raschke and shaped like a wigwam, the gift shop has been a popular tourist tradition in the heart of Minnesota lake country since 1952.

The kit includes a disc blade, a 5-gal. bucket, a small circulating pump, plastic tubing and one rock with a hole drilled through the center of it.

Setup is easy. Dig a hole to bury the bucket leaving the lip a little above ground to avoid dirt from falling in. Place the pump at the bottom of the bucket, and fill

the bucket with water. Connect the tubing to the pump, and run it up through the hole of the disc placed on top of the bucket and then through the rock with the hole that is on top of the disc.

Cover with clean rocks.

"I just plug it in and let it run," Krufft says. "The discs work well because of the concave to drain the water back in the bucket."

Though the pumps are small and inexpensive, Krufft notes she is using the same ones for a second season. She adds water every couple of days to replace water that evaporates.

Customers buy her do-it-yourself bubbling fountains to create water features in their home gardens and cabin landscaping. They can personalize them with rocks they've



Disc sits on top of bucket of water (left). Water is pumped up through rock with hole drilled through it. Other rocks are piled loosely around disc and bucket (right).



collected on vacations or picked from their fields.

Krufft sells the disc fountain kits for \$28 at the Wigwam from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

"I would ship them if people wanted me to, but I also like the idea of people making

their own," Krufft says.

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