

Female Crafters Make Detailed Mini Replicas

The 1/16-scale antique farm equipment at Martin's Miniature Replicas began as metal ingots and chunks of wood. With detailed precision, they are handcrafted into detailed replicas by Annie Martin and four female part-time employees, all part of a Mennonite community.

"We can't compete with mass production since our replicas are all handcrafted," explains Annie Martin, who purchased the business in 2006.

It took a lot of trial and error to learn the process, she notes. But their skills have improved at melting ingots to cast individual parts, snipping and sanding off cast ridges, assembling to make sure they fit, disassembling to paint the pieces and then reassembling with solder, tiny tacks and screws, or glue.

That's just for the metal parts. The women also work with wood to create horse-drawn wagons and threshing machines, which have as many as 100 parts.

"For the steam engine wheels, each spoke is soldered separately," Martin says. "We have decals for some of the tractors, but most toys have hand-painted lettering."

Her business offers dozens of models that replicate the original equipment. They include horse-drawn, steam and threshing equipment - and tractors built up to the 1950's. All are farm-related except for a couple of road graders.

Toys ship to U.S. and Canadian customers. Grain binders, corn binders and mowers have



Martin's Miniature Replicas creates detailed handcrafted replicas that can have as many as 100 parts.



Photos by Aden Martin

been popular lately, and Martin's has many Amish customers, she says.

Prices range from \$275 for Cockshutt, McCormick and Co-op tractors and \$280 for a horse and sleigh, to \$735 for a Waterloo 25 hp. tractor.

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Farm visits allow students to experience different types of agriculture.

Farm Camp Brings Ag To Classrooms

Farm Camp Minnesota is working to close the gap between rural and urban Americans by teaching kids about ag.

"We know that kids learn best about a topic when they hear from people that are actually doing what they're studying," says Ann Vote, Farm Camp Minnesota Program Director. "That's why we work to bring them to the farm or bring the farm right to them."

"Farm Camp is a 3-day experience," Vote says. "On Day 1, students learn in the classroom. They connect with the expert and take a farm tour on Day 2, and then have a career lesson on Day 3."

"Due to Covid, in 2020 we shifted to virtual visits, which worked well," Vote says. "We did 11 virtual visits in 2020 and one on-site visit."

As the 2021-2022 school year gets underway, she says most scheduled visits will be virtual. While some may be disappointed about not traveling to farms, the virtual visits do offer an advantage.

The virtual visits allow classes to hear from presenters they would otherwise not see due

to how far they are from the classroom.

There are also a lot of potential ag hosts who run dairy or hog operations and would love to bring kids out but can't due to biosecurity and other concerns.

"The fact that we've been able to use their cameras to see these sites that kids would never be allowed to visit otherwise has been great," she says.

"We also spend time helping the host set up an engaging presentation," Vote added. "So far, the engagement during the virtual presentations has been fantastic."

Farm Camp Minnesota goes into schools all over the state.

"In the last several decades, we've taken agriculture out of the classrooms," she says. "We don't teach about where our food comes from anymore."

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Pickleball Court Built Inside A Slurrystore

"I finally found a good use for the empty Slurrystore on our farm that we haven't used for more than 20 years," says Minnesotan Denny Skaro.

Skaro's deep blue 20-ft. tall by 52-ft. dia. Slurrystore now holds a regulation-size Pickleball court, with line markings painted onto the concrete floor inside the steel circular walls. "The solid walls make it a little noisy when people start complaining about missed shots or losing a game," Skaro says. "On the other hand, if we have music playing the walls give us our perfect surround sound."

Skaro's Slurrystore stands next to the dairy barn where he and his family milked more than 100 cows. To convert the structure, he removed two steel panels to create a 9 1/2-ft. wide opening. "There were probably 300 3/4-in. bolts holding the panels in place, and it took me almost a full day to get them all out," Skaro says. He used his tractor loader to lift the 800-lb. panels away. He says the floor of the tank had about 1/2-in. of dirt and sediment that had collected over the years.

Skaro pressure-washed the walls and floor and he says "now the inside is as clean as new. I marked the court lines, set up the posts and net, and we were ready to play. It's not quite as roomy as an outside court with a wire fence, but it works just fine for us. We never have to walk very far to retrieve a ball that's



An old 20-ft tall by 52-ft. dia. Slurrystore was cleaned up and converted into a pickleball court.

out of play."

Skaro says when they used the tank for liquid manure it held more than 400,000 gal. from their dairy herd. "We had it full several times, but those days are over now. I thought about making it into equipment storage, but adding a roof was way more expensive than building a new shed. The court is more practical and a lot of fun."

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Elderberries can be used as an herbal remedy to boost your immune system.

Plant-Based Medicines Can Save You Money

Many backyard plants offer health benefits and can save you money by replacing expensive medicines.

For example, a tincture of goldenrod flowers, juniper berries and marshmallow root can provide relief from urinary tract infections, while ingesting a cilantro paste acts as a digestive aid that can help remove heavy metals from your system. Chamomile tea is famous for aiding sleep, but the flowers may also benefit children by easing colic and stomach disorders. While fresh peppermint can wake you up and boost concentration, applying it topically through oil or salve can soothe sore muscles.

If you're new to making herbal remedies, elderberry syrup is an excellent place to start. This woody perennial typically grows under larger trees. Their clusters of indigo berries are easy to harvest in early fall.

The plant is known for its anti-inflammatory and anti-viral properties. Evidence also suggests that chemicals in elderberries can reduce swelling in the mucous membranes of your sinuses to relieve nasal congestion. In other words,

taking elderberry extract can combat cold symptoms and reduce your risk of getting sick.

Here's a recipe for simple homemade elderberry syrup. Combine the following ingredients in a saucepan:

- 1 cup fresh or frozen elderberries
- 1 tbsp sliced ginger
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tbsp whole cloves
- 3 1/2 cups water

Bring to a boil, reduce heat, and simmer until liquid is reduced by half (about 45 min.). Remove the pan from heat, allow to cool, and strain out the spices and berries. Add 1 cup of local honey to the syrup, stir to dissolve, and pour into jars. The syrup will last two mos. in the fridge and over a year in the freezer. Take 1 tablespoon daily for a boost to the immune system.

Here's a book you can buy at Amazon.com with hundreds of plant medicine recipes: Practical Herbal Medicine Handbook: Your Quick Reference Guide to Healing Herbs & Remedies. It sells for \$13 (\$5.99 on Kindle).