



Matt Castagno converted an antique push-type reel mower into a pull-type model for his custom-built tractor.

## Mini-Mower Built For Custom Tractor

Shortly after designing and building a one-of-a-kind custom mini-tractor, Matt Castagno decided that the shiny little gem needed an attachment. Castagno says he originally thought about a belly mower, but that idea morphed into a pull-behind reel mower.

Castagno searched several online sale and auction sites for a mower that he could modify and rebuild in a smaller size to match his tractor. That search turned up reels from golf course mowers, power reels, gang reels, and manual push reel mowers, but none seemed to fit his needs. Eventually, he bought an old Craftsman push mower as a parts donor from a New Hampshire collector. Shipping it to him cost more than the actual mower, but that didn't deter him.

To scale the mower for his tractor, Castagno needed to reduce its width by 4 in. He disassembled the old Craftsman, removing the hubs, wheels, drive mechanism, cutting bar, reel, and roller. He says cutting and

shortening the hardened steel reel, shaft, and knife bar ruined several bandsaw blades. Eventually, he got the parts sized to the proper length. He removed the mower's original push handle and fabricated a new hitch from sheet metal and tube steel. It hooks directly to his tractor and looks "factory made."

Castagno says the original wheels and gear drive mechanism were in good shape and just needed a thorough cleaning to function well. To complete the project, he painted all the mower parts to match the tractor patina and reassembled it with the new hitch. He says the mower and tractor are now museum-quality pieces and won't be used for actual work. Completing this project was so successful Castagno says that he plans to build another tractor that he can use for work, get dirty, and then get it cleaned up to drive in parades.

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## Have You Ever Seen A Canjo?

Before you write off the Canjo as a toy or oddity, check out the videos of it being played on Henry Hoover's website. With a stick, a string, and an empty Spam can, the Tennessee craftsman creates an instrument that's easy to play. At \$70, it's inexpensive enough for a child's beginner instrument or anyone who wants to make music.

The concept of a one-string instrument goes back for generations. Hoover has adapted a modern take on this classic, displayed in his craftsmanship and style. He abandoned the usual round can (often a beer can) for a Spam can as the instrument's resonator and only uses quality hardwoods for the strum stick.

"The can isn't in the way of the wrist when you're playing it. It's reinforced so it doesn't bend easily, and lends itself as a perfect resonator because of its shape," he says.

Hoover's wife Alice first discovered this unique instrument at a festival in Rugby, Tenn. She heard music and made her way to a booth of someone demonstrating how to play a Canjo.

"It was so simple and easy to play," she says. She asked her husband if he could make one. After a few attempts, the Hoover Canjo was born.

Whether it's your first time playing or you're a professional, the Canjo is fun and easy to learn. The frets are numbered to follow along with music in the Canjo Songbook.

Hoover makes the bodies out of kiln-dried hardwoods. His favorite is Ambrosia maple, which has streaks of color created by Ambrosia moths/worms leaving trails in the wood. Black walnut is also in demand. He coats the wood with linseed oil to bring out the grain and protect the wood. He cuts into the wood to insert the fret wire in the proper locations and uses a quality Grover Tuner (lifetime warranty) to tighten the string for precision tuning in different keys. A grommet



The Hoover Canjo is the only featured instrument in the Spam Museum Gift Shop in Austin, Minn.

in the Spam can ensures the string won't cut the can.

The Hoovers sell them along with a pick, songbook pamphlet, and basic instructions at art and craft shows as well as online. The Hoover Canjo is the only featured instrument in the Spam Museum Gift Shop in Austin, Minn.

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Mustang in training in obstacle course.

## Event Promotes Mustang Adoption

See what a horse trainer can do with a wild mustang in just 100 days at the next Extreme Mustang Makeover. The big event showcases both the trainer and the previously wild horse as part of the Mustang Heritage Spectacular, sponsored by the Mustang Heritage Foundation.

"In just 100 days from picking their mustang out of a pen, they'll take their mustang through haltering, saddling, lifting their feet to work on them, and riding them," says Devon O'Day, Mustang Heritage Foundation. "We've seen mustangs at previous makeovers sit on a beanbag, walk across a bridge and run through obstacles. One was doing slides and spins like a Texas quarter horse event. Most of them work without a bridle and bit in the show."

The Mustang Makeover promotes mustang and wild burro adoption by raising awareness of their potential. The Mustang Heritage Foundation is dedicated to finding homes for wild horses and burros. In the past, they worked extensively with the Bureau of Land Management Wild Horse and Burro Program. More recently, they've worked with the U.S. Forestry Service to find homes for the northern California Devil's Garden wild horses.

"Devil's Garden mustangs tend to be in great demand as they're often bigger than other mustangs," says O'Day. "Their bloodlines include workhorses and cavalry horses that were turned loose when no longer needed."

Horse trainers are invited to apply to the foundation for the opportunity to train a mustang and show. "All the trainers pick up their wild mustangs on the same day, 90 to 120 days before the event," says O'Day. "They'll be different ages, but all more than 2 years old and rideable. Some, especially young males, have bone or teeth injuries from fighting while in the herd."

This year, trainers will have the full 120 days to prepare their horses. They'll bring them to the Williamson County Ag Expo



Trainers have up to 120 days to train before the Mustang Makeover competition.

Park in Franklin, Tenn., June 20 to 23 for the Spectacular.

The program will include a trail ride, music for mustangs, a wild horse art event, and three horse shows. More than 100 vendors will be exhibiting.

Mustang Makeovers end with an auction. Prospective owners will have had a chance to see the horses at the show in a variety of events and talk with the trainer. Before the show, many trainers post updates on Facebook as part of a group called 2024 Mustang Heritage Spectacular. Photos and information on participating horses will also be posted online prior to the event.

"This is a competitive auction with the trainer getting half the price and the foundation getting the other half," says O'Day.

Last year, the highest price received was a little over \$10,000, with another horse going for \$7,000. Most sell for \$2,500 to \$3,500. O'Day warns prospective buyers they may end up bidding against the trainer.

"More often than not, the trainer has trouble letting go of the horse," she says.

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