



Bischoff holding one of a pair of lamps restored for his first and last customer, 41 years apart.

Carriage Lantern Business Ends

Rick Bischoff is likely the end of the line for horse-drawn carriage lantern restoration. Until recently, The Luminary Shoppe was the only full-time carriage lamp shop in the U.S. Bischoff had been producing finely handcrafted and restored carriage lamps since the mid-1980s. When he retired earlier this year, he couldn't recommend anyone to buy his business. That wasn't for lack of demand for his craft.

"When I decided to retire, I stopped taking

new business," says Bischoff. "It took me several years just to clear up back orders."

The problem, he explains, is the lack of associated craftsmen. While he did the metal work, including spinning, cutting and bending, he relied on others for glass cutting, beveling and bending. Silver plating and polishing were also outsourced to others.

"There are many skills involved in carriage lamps," says Bischoff. "I couldn't do them all. I made parts, assembled them with those

made or finished by others and did the final painting."

Like Bischoff, many of the other craftsmen he called on have also retired or, like him, are the last in their line of work.

"There's only one man in the country that I know of who can bend glass, and he's 86 years old," says Bischoff. "Corning Glass Works will do it, but one piece of glass can cost \$700 to \$800. There's not enough money in the product to justify that."

Even learning the crafts that Bischoff mastered is not an easy task. When he first purchased an existing coach lamp business, he began researching a particular skill and seeking out craftsmen who would share their advice.

"I ferreted out the methods and procedures, and then I made barrels and barrels of scrap metal until I produced a good part," recalls Bischoff.

Spinning metal and producing curved parts with the use of an English wheel were particularly challenging. Breaking into a craft industry where reputations were everything was equally difficult.

Bischoff started by attending a nationally recognized carriage auction and buying old lamps. He would restore them, return to the auction, and put them up for sale. Gradually, his reputation grew.

"One day, I had a call from Steve Holm, then a coachman who worked for David Rockefeller," recalls Bischoff. "He'd watched my work at the auctions and asked

me to restore two lamps he wanted to give Rockefeller as a birthday gift."

That call and the resulting job opened the door to work for museums, collectors and others with lamps to replace or restore.

As Bischoff's career wound down, he determined to pass on what he had learned, should others wish to develop the skills. His brother-in-law, Dave Engel, has posted over 500 videos on YouTube about various crafts required for horse-drawn vehicle building and restoration. He suggested Bischoff do the same.

"I've made 50 videos over the years and covered everything I felt was important about the business," says Bischoff. "If anyone wants to attempt this sort of work, the videos will provide a guide."

Many of Bischoff's unique tools and examples of his work are now on display in a shop and museum in his hometown of Joliet, Mont. Engel bought The Luminary Shoppe to preserve Bischoff's work and crafts.

While Bischoff had begun turning down new assignments several years earlier, he did take on one last job before retiring. It was for Holm, now a nationally recognized carriage driving judge.

"Steve had a pair of lamps he wanted me to restore," says Bischoff. "He was my first and last customer, 41 years apart."

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Consider Edible Flowers For Your Garden

It's rare these days that a flower finds its way to a plate. That's unfortunate, as flowers have been a part of human diets for thousands of years. Today, chefs are incorporating flowers into their dishes, and home cooks are catching up fast.

Edible flowers can be used to decorate cakes, add a splash of color to salads, frozen into ice cubes, dried into tea, and even preserved into jelly. However, not all varieties taste good enough to earn their place. Here are eight unexpectedly delicious flowers to experiment with in the kitchen this year.

First on the list are squash blossoms. They've long been prized in Italian cuisine and are delicious fried, stuffed, baked and incorporated into pasta dishes. It's best to use the blossoms the same day you pick them, but beware, every harvest will sacrifice the plant's potential for squash.

Next are roses, grown for their saturated colors and intense aromas. The flavor might be more subdued than the scent, though varieties can range from sweet to spicy. Seek out darker petals for the strongest flavor. They hold up well frozen into ice cubes, churned

into ice cream, or added to frosting for cakes and cupcakes.

Chives are a versatile herb, and there's no need to worry if yours have flowered. The plant's sharp bite is preserved within the round, purple flowers, making them an excellent addition to salads, potato dishes and soup.

Nasturtiums remain a popular choice as an edible flower. With lily pad-like leaves and vibrant flowers in an array of colors, it's as gorgeous in a decorative planter as on your dinner plate. The entire plant is edible, with a strong, peppery bite. You can even use the seeds as a substitute for capers. An annual across most of the world, nasturtium is easy to grow from seed, especially when soaked first to improve germination.

Wild violets produce small, delicate flowers that add elegance to any dish. Candied (sugared) violets have been popular in France for over a century and make an eye-catching ornament on cakes and cookies.

Marigolds, valued as a garden pest deterrent, offer sunny colors and a bitter tang, making them a great substitute for

tarragon. Remove the white portion at the end of each petal, and the flowers make for a refreshing tea.

While most gardeners know the hack of transforming cilantro into coriander, fewer realize that its flowers are also edible. They add an understated citrus flavor to any dish, making them a good addition to salads and Mexican cooking.

Finally, lavender is making a splash in the culinary world, and for a good reason. The flowers have an intensely sweet flavor that stands out in scones, teas, and even salads. It's a hardy perennial, so with luck, you'll be finding uses for your lavender flowers for years to come.

Regarding harvesting, it's good form to ask permission before picking flowers from someone's yard. Likewise, consider asking about spraying habits—you wouldn't want to make a salad from wild violets that were recently laced with Roundup. For this same reason, it's best to avoid roadside flowers or those grown by garden centers. Grow your own, if possible, to both control the amendments used and enjoy a beautiful yard.



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Supporting Refugees Through Spoon Carving

A nonprofit on a Greek Island aims to help displaced people earn a living and rebuild a sense of home.

"We began approximately five years ago with a straightforward aim: to assist refugees arriving in Lesvos, Greece," says founder and CEO Randall Graber. "Most of these individuals have fled war and poverty. They're seeking a fresh start."

In 2018, Randall and his wife, Althea, moved to Lesvos to help manage a vegetable farm that supported refugees from countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Syria, Ethiopia, Pakistan and Eritrea. While the men speak many languages, English and Greek are used on the farm to help them acclimate.

"We began with a 3-acre market garden program, providing much-needed jobs, language training and vocational skills to help our employees integrate into Greek culture and society," Graber says.

The island specializes in olive oil, so it's home to millions of olive trees that require plenty of pruning. A worker suggested they put the scrap wood to use.

"We recognized the need for more consistent employment due to the seasonality

of agricultural work and expanded our initiative. Lesvos Woodcraft was born."

The spoon-making process begins with raw olive wood logs. Using a band saw, the men cut the logs into slabs, then use templates and a pencil to trace the design of the spoon. With a band saw, they cut out the rough shape, creating what's called a "spoon blank." The bowl of the spoon is carved with chisels and hook knives, and the handle is fine-tuned with knives and a spokeshave. Once the shape is perfected, each spoon is sanded to a fine, smooth finish, and the carver uses a wood burner to write his initial on the underside of the handle. A protective layer of linseed oil and beeswax is the final step.

"Lesvos Woodcraft continues its core mission of helping refugees build new lives, offering practical support and a pathway to self-sufficiency," Graber says. "Currently, spoon making and farm work are 50/50. The men typically start the day working on the farm and then finish the day in the workshop, making spoons. But as we expand, we foresee having some men working full-time crafting spoons."

One of the biggest challenges is the training

time required for each new artisan to learn the skills to craft spoons.

"We use some traditional techniques that take time to learn well. It takes more than 1.5 hours to make each spoon, varying somewhat by design," explains Graber.

Most of the carvers had minimal business experience in their previous lives, so part of the mission is teaching them how business works at a more detailed level than standard employer-to-employee relationships. The goal is to provide them with better tools for acclimating to Greek culture and eventually reunite with their families there.

For corporate gifting, the utensil sets consistently rank as top sellers. The standout utensil is a 12-in. multi-purpose cooking spoon, priced at \$35. It features a blunt scraping edge and deep bowl, making it versatile for cooking, serving and scraping pans clean.

There's a web page dedicated to corporate gifting for employees or clients. Businesses can add their logos to the spoons for an additional fee, and larger orders receive a discount.

Lesvos Woodcraft is seeking connections



Once the shape is perfected, each spoon is sanded to a fine, smooth finish.

with suitable stores that are willing to carry the spoons.

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