



MOTHER EARTH NEWS

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DECEMBER 2017/JANUARY 2018

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Printed on recycled paper

Issue No. 285 • \$5.99 US • Display until Jan. 16, 2018



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MOTHER'S Product Picks



Kombucha Kit

\$59.95 at www.MotherEarthNews.com/Store

As an avid kombucha drinker, editor Russell Mullin saw making his own brew as a natural next step. After all, buying tangy fermented kombucha from a health food store isn't cheap—as much as \$4 for a 16-ounce bottle. Making his own, Russell has discovered he can brew an entire gallon of organic kombucha for about \$2, which comes out to just 25 cents per bottle! Even better: He can flavor his own kombucha however he wants by brewing with ripe fruit that's in season, or using up leftover produce before it goes bad.

Russell figures his 5-liter Mortier Pilon kombucha fermentation crock (made in Canada) paid for itself after only two batches. He likes its push-button spigot, which seems less prone to clogging than swivel-type spigots, and makes it easy to taste-test his brew as it's undergoing fermentation. The Mortier Pilon has a filter that allows air to pass in and out. The rewritable label on the top lets him easily track the brew start date and flavor. The jar's commodious 5 liters allows enough room to make a full gallon of tea with more space for adding juices, fruits, or other flavorings. And the jar is a stylish addition to any countertop. As Russell says, "Making kombucha often looks like a science experiment, but Mortier Pilon adds a pleasing aesthetic flair when it's out for serving."

MOTHER EARTH NEWS Store, 800-234-3368

Handmade Gardening Tools

\$125.00 at www.HomesteadIron.com

Will Dobkins' goal is to produce quality tools and ironwork his blacksmithing great-grandfather would've been proud of. Dobkins offers his hand-forged iron tools through his homegrown business, Homestead Iron.

Made in the Ozark Mountains of Missouri, every Homestead Iron tool is carefully ground by hand to ensure a super-sharp cutting edge. Blades are high-carbon steel that's been TIG-welded to a hand-forged shank. All tools are annealed and heat-treated for a hard cutting edge and strong shank. A local manufacturer provides the hickory handles, and Dobkins finishes the tools with beeswax and linseed oil.

Editorial Director Hank Will is a proud owner of Homestead Iron tools. "Not only are they functional, and of the utmost hand-crafted quality," Hank says, "but they're imbued with the maker's passion and energy, which is transmitted through the handles every time I use them." Homestead Iron also repairs and restores tools and accepts custom orders.

The four-piece gift set would be appreciated by any gardener on your holiday gift list. The set includes a scuffle weeder, large trowel, V-hoe, and weeding fork.

Homestead Iron, 417-543-9182



Pressure Cooker

\$149.95 at www.FagorAmerica.com

Pressure cookers are popular kitchen implements among the MOTHER EARTH NEWS staff. These heavy pots seal tightly so their contents can cook quickly under pressure. Most dishes cook in just a third of the normal time! Pressure cookers have other benefits as well. Steam pressure will tenderize tough meats, making inexpensive cuts fork-tender. Flavors inside the pot become concentrated because the food cooks in just a small amount of liquid.

Fagor, a well-known European manufacturer of pressure cookers, has issued a new line—the Helix. Editorial Director Hank Will put a Helix to the pressure test in his own kitchen. "The cooker is simple to use, and it makes preparing some of my favorite suppers after work a most delicious 'fast food' experience," he says. The stainless-steel Helix comes with a 10-year warranty and has two pressure settings, an automatic release, and built-in safety features.

Fagor America, 800-207-0806



Seed Packet Storage Box

\$19.99 at www.GrowOrganic.com

Is your garden better organized than your seed packets? Here's a handy way to store your seeds so you can find exactly what you need to start growing on the first warm day of spring. Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply's basic seed packet storage kit includes a 5-inch-wide by 5-inch-high plastic box with locking handles, which will accommodate most standard seed packets. The kit also comes with 32 laminated index cards to help organize your seeds; each card is printed with a type of plant and helpful growing instructions. California-based Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply also offers a deluxe storage box kit for \$29.99. Besides the storage box and laminated cards, the deluxe kit also includes 24 wooden plant labels, a marking pencil, and a hand seed sower with an adjustable outlet to control the flow for five different seed sizes.

"Before I received this kit, my seeds were jumbled up in a paper bag on the floor of a closet," says editor Rebecca Martin. "Now, the packets are organized by the pre-labeled glossy index cards. The small plastic box is easily stored in the refrigerator to keep my seeds in the proper cool, dry environment year-round."

Peaceful Valley, 888-784-1722



Reusable Food Wrap

\$18.00 for assorted 3-pack at www.MotherEarthNews.com/Store

With the goal of eliminating plastics in her family's kitchen, Sarah Kaeck rediscovered an old tradition: infusing cotton fabric with beeswax, jojoba oil, and tree resin. The result is a handy alternative to plastic wrap. Kaeck's company, Bee's Wrap, produces a washable, reusable, and compostable food wrap that's handmade in Bristol, Vermont. The warmth of your hands makes the wrap supple and pliable so it will conform to the food you're storing within. Used a few times per week, the wrap will last up to a year. When it's at the end of its useful life, you can compost the organic wrap or cut it into strips to use as a firestarter. The beeswax is sourced from sustainably-managed hives in the U.S., and the fabric and printing are certified by the Global Organic Textile Standard.

Editor Rebecca Martin has used Bee's Wrap for several years on cheese, vegetables, bread, fruit, and baked goods. "It keeps cheeses and homemade bread fresh for days. It's so easy to reuse—just wipe it clean or shake off the crumbs, and fold it up in a drawer until you need to use it again." The MOTHER EARTH NEWS Store offers a variety of Bee's Wrap packs, including single wraps starting at \$6.60, a 3-pack of medium-size wraps for \$18, and a variety pack of assorted sizes for \$42.

MOTHER EARTH NEWS Store, 800-234-3368



Water Filtration System

\$199.99 at www.MotherEarthNews.com/Store

The AquaRain Natural Water Filter is suited to off-grid or emergency situations because it can provide safe, clean drinking water without the use of electricity or chemicals. Gravity draws the water down through a bed of activated carbon that's encased in a ceramic micro filter. The stainless-steel housing is press-formed without seams or welds and has easy-lift handles. Made in the United States, the AquaRain promises to remove cryptosporidium, *Giardia lamblia*, *E. coli*, and other microbes, as well as chlorine compounds.

We've tested the 1½-gallon capacity Model 202, which we sell in the MOTHER EARTH NEWS Store along with the 3-gallon 402 (\$239.99) and 404 (\$319.99) models. The 404 comes with a full complement of four ceramic elements to filter water faster; it's capable of producing up to a gallon of drinking water per hour. Employee Charlotte Brunin tried out the filtration system on her family's "nasty yellow well water" and says "the AquaRain gave me clear, tasty drinking water!"

MOTHER EARTH NEWS Store, 800-234-3368