

CRAFT CONTACTS

CRAFTS ASSOCIATION of BC

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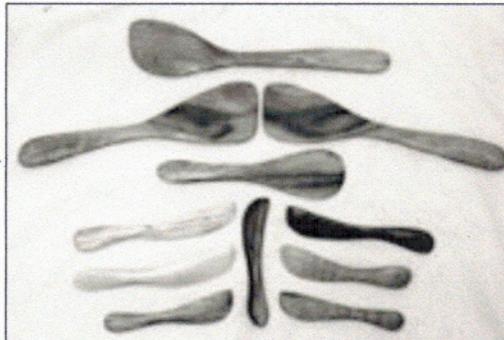
The Crafts Association of British Columbia is a network of craft professionals dedicated to the development of excellence in crafts.

www.cabc.net

Member Profile



Ron Bazar trimming a small knife on the band saw.



Ron Bazar, Arbutus Art Culinary Collection.

Ron Bazar

By Laura Buccì

"It's a very sweet thing," says Ron Bazar of the driver that waves at you driving down the road. A pleasure experienced only in small places. Nestled in the Northern Gulf Islands, lies his house at Tiber Bay, on the south east coast of Cortes Island, island population 950. Set on a mossy covered bluff, he has a view of the ocean and islands of Desolation Sound, with majestic Mount Denman in the background. To reach one of his closest neighbours, he walks on a trail up a bluff for a quarter mile. Sounds travel easily in this quiet part of the world. A neighbour chatting outside or chopping wood are some of the sounds indicating human presence.

Bazar's communally-owned forest backyard (130 acres) provides the starting point for his craft – a culinary and kitchen collection of silky smooth, gently contoured kitchen utensils, from butter knives to salad sets. The forest is abundant with arbutus trees, Bazar's favourite and sole material. In keeping with his sensitivity to the environment, Bazar doesn't cut down live trees. He manually collects forest fall down or dead branches all year round, slowly creating piles that he moves closer and closer to the road side that he then takes to this workshop.

Bazar stores the wood outside his compact eight by ten foot shop. Arbutus is hardly ever used in furniture as it is a difficult wood to work with. It is very dense and cracks, twists, and bends as it dries, but to slow down this process, Bazar seals the ends with log seal.

Few tools are employed in producing these culinary and kitchen utensils. After careful scrutiny, to determine quality and artistic potential, Bazar works with a chainsaw to cut down branches to one to two feet long. Next, he trims the wood to flat, rectangular pieces with a bandsaw. This is also where the utensils begin to



Arbutus trees overlooking the sea.

take shape. He then spends a lot of time sanding during which he removes half of the wood to finalize the shapes and contours of the utensils. "As I'm sanding, I'm deciding what grade this particular product is," says Bazar. Unique wood grain and rare colouring qualify a piece into the Supreme Selection, the top of five quality grades. Finally, he uses a variety of natural finishes to further enhance the beauty of the pieces. More sanding might ensue, followed by more finishing.

Bazar is truly in love with the arbutus tree as he openly declares on his website, "my favourite tree in the whole wide world." Arbutus, also known as madrona, is a truly rugged tree. It twists and turns in search of sunlight and can often be seen clinging to rocky bluffs overlooking the ocean. It generally offers tones of creamy white, browns, pinks to reddish browns, but purples and deep dark red can also be found.

How did Bazar come to woodworking? (His background is mainly in business as his Bachelor of Commerce and MBA will attest.) He doesn't remember clearly, but says his interest perhaps started in high school in his native Montreal. He was really interested in the lathe, so to buy one, he saved up his money from shovelling snow and selling Pepsi and chocolate covered snacks. Years later, he is still very proud of his first turning project – a walnut and birch lamp.

But his first utensil type project, a letter opener for his mother, was created back in 2000. It all came about as he was pre-shaping a piece of wood for a turning project. The excess pieces that were going into the kindling box, actually looked quite gorgeous. Encouraged by his mom's reaction, he began to work on a batch of letter openers and butter knives. Nine months later, he got into his kayak with his stash and paddled an hour and a half to Refuge Cove, a supply stop for boaters. The owner of the gift

store there bought a \$500 order and the rest is history.

Since then Bazar has refined his technique. Previously, he used an axe to shape the wood, but a bloody accident led a friend to introduce him to the bandsaw. This not only gave him more control over the contours he was trying to achieve but also increased his productivity. An improvement that appealed to Bazar's business sense.

He admits he likes the way things are now: simple and streamlined. He could make spoons, but that would mean getting more equipment. Sanding is a lot of work and the repetitive action is troublesome. He could hire someone to help him produce the utensils but that would mean getting Worker's Compensation at the very least. "Things are working well now," he says.

"Woodworking keeps me busy on a part-time to full-time basis."

Woodworking is only one part of Ron Bazar's life. His education and background in business allow him to offer consulting services, and he is also developing an online world-wide business directory. His love and commitment to the land have gotten him involved in a 150 acre eco-forestry land project on Cortes Island. And thanks to his business knowledge he is quite comfortable running his craft endeavour.

The key to his success seems to lie in simplicity. Simplicity in the range of product offered, simplicity in its production, and the ability to do it all in a tranquil and stunning setting overlooking Desolation Sound.

Upcoming Craffhouse Gallery Exhibitions at a Glance

Openings take place 6 - 8 pm on the first day of exhibits. Contact 604-687-7270 for further information.

Until June 3, 2007. Jean Kuwabara, "Random Pattern." In this body of work based on West Coast imagery, the nature of random pattern is investigated. Random pattern is both the subject of these works, and the method by which they are produced.

June 7 - July 1, 2007. Tammy Hudgeon, "Whimsical Spirit." Opening Reception: Thursday, June 7, 6 - 8 pm. Joyous meditations on life, love, colour and travel in fused and slumped glass.

July 5 - 29, 2007. Jill Allan, "Clear Cut." Opening Reception: Thursday July 5, 6 - 8 pm. Thick glass bowls with fine, crisp, interior patterns, projecting a spray of colour and light.

August 2 - September 2, 2007. Christina Luck, "Crowd." Opening Reception: August 2, 6 - 8 pm. A crowd of people one might encounter anywhere - some strangers, some friends, some lovers, imagined in carved and painted wood.

September 6 - 30, 2007. Dominique Brechault, "The Road." Opening Reception: Thursday, September 6, 6 - 8 pm. Jewellery. An exploration on the theme of "The Road," based on a recent personal journey - an 800 kilometre walk to Santiago, Spain, following the Camino Frances.

October 4 - 28, 2007. Nancy Hall, "The Climb." Opening Reception: Thursday, October 4, 6 - 8 pm. Each rug celebrates an ascent: women's climb from invisibility to recognition; Hall's own struggles as a rural Prairie artist to achieve new heights and to take craft up the steep incline to fine art.

November 1 - December 2, 2007. Sharon Reay, "Book Ends." Opening Reception: November 1, 6 - 8 pm. Classic childhood bedtime stories come alive, in this exhibition of ceramic bookends, featuring favourite characters spilling forth from the pages.

March 1 - April 1, 2008. Eliza Au, "Circumference." Opening Reception: Thursday March 1, 6 - 8 pm. Circumference is a series of ceramic wreaths that investigate the use of the wreath as a ritual object for life and death.