



The Gourdzette

The Official Newsletter of the Gourd Community

January 8, 2004

Quote of the Week:

"Ability is what you're capable of doing. Motivation determines what you do. Attitude determines how well you do it."

-Lou Holtz

Mixed Bottle Gourds 20% Off!



Order this large box packed full of gourds sizes 2 to 10 inches in diameter! They can be used for just about anything from vases to birdhouses. The possibilities are endless!

Box of Mixed Bottle Gourds includes 28-30 bottle gourds all for **20% off** the regular price!

To order your Box of Mixed Bottle Gourds, [Click here!](#)

View Our Entire Catalog!

Create your own custom gourd orders, pick up a prepackaged gourd kit, and find the tools you need to make your next gourd project a true masterpiece!

[Click Here Now!](#)

"Thank you so very much for the Gourdzette. I was so thrilled when I opened my mail... I have enjoyed this newsletter more than you know and it makes me want to go to the basement and start painting!"

- Maggie, Butler, MO

Welcome New Subscribers!

Did you miss the last newsletter? You can always catch up on issues you miss! Just visit the [Gourdzette Archive page](#) of our web site! Did a friend forward you this newsletter? Would you like to subscribe? [Click Here!](#)

We are pleased to bring you the new edition of "The Gourdzette!" Be sure to check your in-box every 2 weeks for more great issues!

"Just finished reading about Bonnie Gibson, bam bam, what a great and inspiring article. I really look forward to reading your newsletters and read them as soon as they pop up on my computer. "

-Jewell Nagel

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ANNOUNCEMENTS

(1) California Gourds Emerges as Your Leading Online Retailer of Welburn Gourds

Headed up by Patti Diaz, the International Gourd Art Festival director and now former Operations Manager of Welburn Gourd Farm, California Gourds will provide you with better customer service & quicker response time to your ordering needs. [Click here](#) to shop now!

"I love your newsletter, particularly the tips and ideas!..."
- Sioux G.

New to Gourd Crafting?

Get started now with the most popular gourd crafting kit on the market!

[Click Here Now!](#)

"I really do enjoy you all's newsletter. I like the variety very much and it is also just plain fun to review."
- Circe J., Texas

Fabulous Pine Needle Gourd Kit!

Why not make your very own Pine Needle Basket? The kit comes with full color, step-by-step instructions.

(2)How Can We Serve You Better?

California Gourds is dedicated to bringing you the best gourds, products and service possible! Please let us know how we can serve you better. What would you liked to see changed or improved on: web site? newsletter? products or services? [Send us an e-mail!](#)

FEATURE ARTICLE

Interview with Gourd Artist Andrea Jansen

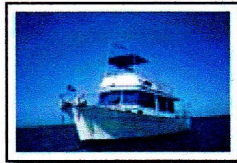
by Andrea Dominguez



Q: How long have you been a gourd artist?

A: I have been working with gourds for a little over 2 years.

Q: You have a very interesting location for your studio. Can you tell the readers a bit about it?



A: My studio is my home, which at present is a boat. About 5 years ago, while living in Oregon, my husband and I decided we wanted a change of lifestyle. Call it a mid-life crisis, but we quit our jobs, sold just about everything we owned and purchased a 1971 Trawler. Starting out from Florida, we headed south with no particular destination in mind. We arrived in Puerto Rico 4 months later and fell in love with the island. We have been ever since.

Q: When did you begin painting?

A: I began painting 10 years ago as a hobby. Many years ago I lived and worked in Europe, where I fell in love with the variety of folk art each country had to offer. Self-taught, I focused on the Norwegian style of Rosemaling and began working on furniture, plates and other decorative wooden items.

Q: When and how were you inspired to begin working with gourds?

A: In 2001 a friend gave me my first gourd, challenging me to "...see what you can do with this...". I had to ask what it was, since I was not very familiar with gourd art and the gourds here in Puerto Rico are totally different than those of the States.

Q: The gourds used in your artwork are actually called "higüeras." How do they differ from Welburn Gourds and other gourds grown in United States?

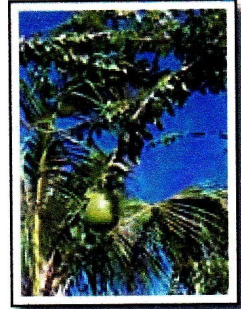
A: Well, the major difference is that the "higüera" (pronounced

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"I really enjoy your newsletter, the tips have been very helpful!"

- Deanna H.,
Montana

"ee-gwer-a") grows on trees. It is a variety of calabash, and its shell is much thinner and denser than those grown in the U.S. Their shapes are round to oval and vary in size from small billiard balls to large watermelons. The pulp is actually much like a watermelon, and as the moisture evaporates it compacts down to a ball. The largest higüeras I have worked with are approximately 20" in length, which I thought was huge until I went to the International Gourd Art Festival at the Welburn Gourd Farm last year!



Q: How do you bring the knowledge and skills from your previous experience into your work with gourds?

A: I would have to say that my experiences traveling around the world has made the largest impact on my present work. This may sound strange, but my attitude has always been "no guts, no glory," and that is my approach to gourds. I incorporate elements of various cultures. In addition, I am extremely detail-oriented and I enjoy adding small, intricate details to my pieces.

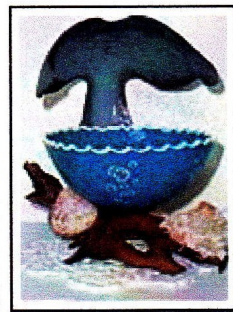


Q: Did you encounter any specific difficulties when you first began working with the higüeras?

A: Well, first of all I needed to learn how to wield a power tool. Starting with a basic drill, I quickly moved on to my favorite, the Dremel® rotary tool. Attempts to cut simple shapes resulted in my hand jerking wildly, which ultimately led to the leaf-edge cuts I use in many of my pieces. I also found that when I cut the higüeras while green, the pieces would tend to warp and crack along the edges as they dried naturally.

Q: How did you overcome those difficulties?

A: I now dry the higüeras completely prior to carving. This may take anywhere from 2 to 6 months, but by that time the higüeras have pretty much done all the twisting and cracking they are going to do. I then cut around the defects. It makes the cleaning process more difficult, but the end result is well worth it. We have higüeras hanging in hammocks up on the flybridge of the boat to dry, a strange sight, and some good friends allow us to take advantage of their roof.



Q: Is your artwork inspired by your local landscape and culture?

A: Definitely. Puerto Rico is a lush, tropical island with a wide variety of flora from which to derive inspiration. I marvel at the propensity of plants growing wild here; plants which I tried, unsuccessfully, to grow back home in the States. Traditional Taino Indian petroglyphs are also featured on some pieces, and of course the sea brings me a great deal of inspiration. I often see dolphins swimming around our boat, and the whales we encountered on the trip down are represented in my Nautical Collection.

Q: You create such beautiful and intricate baskets. Do you find that this is what you enjoy creating the most?

A: Yes, I do, but I can't explain why. They just seem more delicate looking to me, and I enjoy experimenting with different shades of leaves and flowers. I have a tendency to cover every inch of my pieces and painting the underside of the handles is trying at times, but when finished I want to keep each one!



Q: Your artwork has earned you a very prestigious title from your local community. Can you explain?

A: I am a certified "Artesana", a title awarded by the government agency FOMENTO. Standards are high, and artists must use natural materials indigenous to Puerto Rico, capturing the rich culture and beauty of the island. Embellishments such as semi-precious stones and metals are not allowed, but I am able to add items such as seashells and seeds. You must be an Artesan in order to attend many of the shows around the island.

Q: Do you attend any craft shows and festivals in Puerto Rico and here in the states?

A: There are literally hundreds of festivals yearly across the island, many by invitation only. Being "on the circuit" for just over a year, I attend as many as my schedule allows, and have been pleased and proud to be invited to some of the most prestigious events. You must understand that being a "Norteamericana" makes me a bit of an oddity at these events, but the public has been most enthusiastic. The [International Gourd Art Festival](#) at the Welburn Gourd Farm was my first off the island, and I was sponsored by FOMENTO, which was very pleased with my representation of Puerto Rico and return home with two awards from the California Gourd Society competition.

Q: What appeals to you most about attending these types of events?

Dealing with the public is my favorite part. Here in Puerto Rico, higüeras are most often made into masks and maracas and gourd art is relatively unknown. I love to see the surprised look when I explain to people that my pieces are indeed higüeras. Some do not believe me at all, but most are amazed and thank me for introducing a new approach to Puerto Rican art. In California I received similar reactions when I informed the public that our gourds grow on trees.



Q: Which events will you participate in this year?

A lot depends on the sponsorship of FOMENTO, but in addition to this year's International Gourd Art Festival at Welburn Gourd Farm, I hope to attend the Illinois Gourd Society's show at the Chicago Botanical Garden in September and a show in Westchester, New York in the fall. My website lists a schedule of upcoming events.

Q: Can you offer any tips, suggestions or words of wisdom to our readers who are just beginning their journey of gourd crafting or even those who are seasoned crafters?

A: Don't be afraid to experiment. Breaking into your first gourd may be daunting, but remember, this is not brain surgery. My background is in Business Management, and as a child art classes used to make me break into a sweat. We learn from our mishaps, and I often tell my students, "We are not born knowing how to paint...anyone can learn if they have the desire." Carving and painting are only a couple of options to working with gourds, so use your creativity and just go wild!