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Cultivate creativity through *candles*

Nikki Crain's candles sit in her Three Rivers home.

RON HOLMAN



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Nikki Crain demonstrates soy candle making at her home in Three Rivers.

Three Rivers woman shows others how fun — and fruitful — making soy candles can be

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BY KIMBERLINA ROCHA

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Their lasting aroma and decorative properties place candles among the leading gifts for birthdays and holidays.

There are plenty of fragrances, colors, shapes and sizes to choose from. But instead of having to settle for an already-made candle, why not make your own?

How about a country apple-scented candle in a color besides red?

Nikki Crain helps candle-lovers discover their creative side, holding classes at her Three Rivers home on making soy wax candles.

"I love being creative," said Crain, who's also an avid weaver. "I love candles and I have fun making them. Now, I found a way of sharing it."

Soy wax candles tend to burn cleaner and last longer than other types, she said, especially those that use paraffin wax.

"They last 10 hours per an ounce [of wax]," she said. "You get a lot more for your money."

Anne Hayes of Three Rivers has taken one class with Crain and

plans to go back for more.

"It was really soothing, getting to play with candles and putting fragrances together," she said. "It was a lot fun taking a class, and I was able to meet new people."

Hayes, a landscaper who specializes in organic products, said soy candles are better than others for the environment.

"I love the ambiance of candles, they throw a really nice glow," she said. "And being made of natural products, I know my body is not going to be hurt by the smoke."

Making a candle is simple, Crain said.

When groups huddle around her dining room table, making candles for the first time, Crain hits a red button bearing the word "Easy" when each step is finished.

The phrase "That was easy" usually brings the crowd to giggles, she said.

Crain charges \$10 to lead novices or returning-students on a step-by-step candle-making journey.

Customers pick any hue, ranging from cinnamon brown to green apple, and maybe add a swirl of something else. Various fragrances also are at their disposal.

MAKE YOUR OWN SOY CANDLES

Candle-making kits often include wax and tools. Here's what to do with them:

- ▶ Melt the wax, heating it to 185 degrees on the stove top.
- ▶ Take the melted wax off stove and add coloring. Stir.
- ▶ Once the wax has cooled to 150 degrees, add fragrance (1 ounce per a pound of wax). Stir.
- ▶ Measure the container you plan to use to hold the wax. Determine wick size.
- ▶ Center the wick in the container and use two-sided stick tape to keep it attached at the bottom.
- ▶ Use a wick holder or clip to carry the wick to the side, making it easier to pour the wax into the container.
- ▶ When the wax is cooled to 105 degrees, pour carefully into the glass container.
- ▶ Allow the wax to cool and harden. Once it's solid, trim the wick to about 1/8 of an inch before lighting the



RON HOLMAN

Nikki Crain holds a bag of wicks as she demonstrates how to make soy candles at her home in Three Rivers. She holds candle-making classes at her home.

candle.

Source: Nikki Crain

CLASSES AND EQUIPMENT

Nikki Crain charges \$10 for candle-making classes, \$299 for a make-candles-at-home kit that includes wax and tools. Information: 561-4048 or www.nussentials.com/nikkicrain.