

I N Y O U R D R E A M S

DON'T HAVE A COW, MAN, BUT YOU CAN USE MILK TO MAKE PAINT

By ELAINE HESSER

MILK PAINT. It's been used for thousands of years, and you can make it at home if you like. Other than a slightly sour odor that craft queen Martha Stewart swears will go away when it dries, it's odorless. It's also non-toxic and has been known to last more than a hundred years.

Kristi Reimers, owner of Eco Carmel, sells a popular brand called Real Milk Paint, which will soon offer a new color created by Jon Stuefloten. Stuefloten, owner of Restoration Painting, has worked on renovations of Point Sur Lighthouse, Point Pinos Lighthouse and the interior of Crespi Hall at the Mission. He created the new color — Stillwater Grey — for a house on Stillwater Cove. It will debut at Eco Carmel on June 23.

He worked with Reimers to replicate the color of a weathered board at the home, as well as to capture the color of fog at the cove. The paint comes as a white powder base, and painters — professional or amateur — can select from an assortment of mineral-based colors to mix with it. After some trial and error, Stuefloten and Reimers got the exact hue they wanted.

Chinese royalty

After that, Stuefloten used an exterior version of the paint with tung oil added to make it more durable. The oil, from the nut of the tung tree, has a heritage almost as long as milk paint does. Its origins are in ancient China, where it was used to waterproof sails and paper umbrellas. It was also used as a stain for Chinese royal families' furniture — and still is used as a stain today.

Reimers and Stuefloten said that one of things that makes the paint so durable is that unlike latex products, it "breathes," allowing any moisture that gets into the wood to evaporate rather than create bubbles underneath that later cause cracks. Also, the limestone in Real Milk Paint's product inhibits mildew and mold, and repels insects. In most cases, it doesn't require any primer, either, which makes it popular with DIYers and crafters.

It can go right onto raw wood, terra cotta pots, baskets or

even over rust, and works best on a clean, oil-free surface that's not perfectly smooth. That means it can turn your garage sale find — anything from a table to a flowerpot — into an objet d'art without hours of laborious sanding or prep.

Another advantage of milk paint is that it can be thinned with water as much as the painter likes. That means it can be used to give a whitewashed finish. Depending on how it's applied — the type of brush or roller makes a difference — it can create a nice vintage feel.

It can be left as is, or finished with a wax or other product to give it a bit of a gloss or an antiqued look. As craft paints go, it's not too expensive — \$15.50 gets you a pint, which covers 35 square feet — but if you really want to have the all-American do-it-yourself experience, you can follow Martha Stewart's recipe. It makes basic white, but you can also add artists' pigment from

an art supply store to it to make colors.

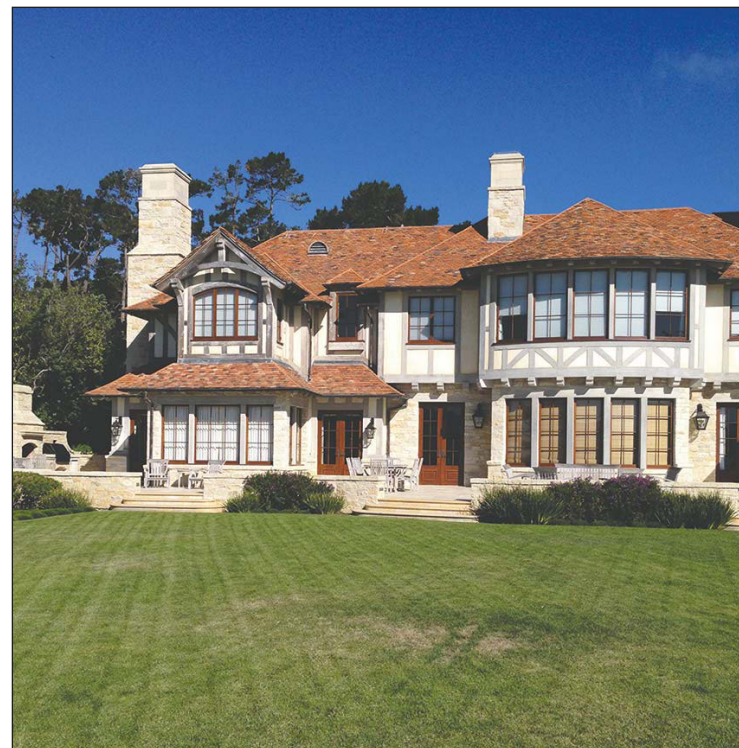
You'll need: 1 quart of nonfat milk, a lemon, a sieve or colander and some cheesecloth. What you want to do is separate the curds (milk solids) and whey (liquid). The curds contain casein, which makes the paint stick to surfaces as it dries. So, add the juice of one lemon to the milk and let it sit at room temperature overnight.

Put the cheesecloth into the sieve or colander, pour the curdled milk into it to drain off the whey, then dump your curds into a bowl. Stir to smooth them out, and mix in the pigment if you're using it. Voila! Paint! It should be obvious, but you have to use it with a few hours of making it. It might or might not keep in the fridge.

Or, you could just go to Eco Carmel and shop the paint section. Maybe you'll even end up with a pint of Stillwater Grey.



Eco Carmel sells various tints of Real Milk Paint in pints, quarts and gallons. Soon, it will also carry Stillwater Grey, which was specially created for a house next to the eponymous cove (right).



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