

# Children's furniture, Ferdinand style

## Fest Woodworking at the Legion

BY CASEY UEBELHOR

*Santa's workshop must have a room just like this...*

Tucked into the forests just north of Ferdinand is the home of husband and wife woodworkers, Alois and Joey Fest. Their garage is as enchanting as the North Pole must be: handmade rockers, tables and chairs, all perfectly sized for children, fill the space which serves as the couple's finishing studio.

"It's a family tradition," tells Joey of the craft. Alois began making children's rocking chairs following the woodworking pattern of his late father, Lawrence Fest of nearby St. Henry. Lawrence made the rockers for his grandchildren, and Alois decided to continue the tradition. Alois' mother, Theresa helped him and Joey at first, particularly instructing them on how to finish the pieces. These days the Fests work about three months out of the year on their products. While Alois cuts, trims and constructs, Joey does the sanding and finishing work.

Through the years, Alois has made small improvements to his father's pattern, including a curved seat (so that little bottoms won't slip off) and longer runners (to keep little rockers from tipping). Then, after a few years of rocker-making, a new kind of project was requested of Alois — a table and chair set for his nieces and nephews. The Fests accepted the challenge, and today, their children's tables and chairs are a big hit! "We've had some people buy eight to ten sets," tells Alois of locals who love his work.

At Christkindlmarkt Alois and Joey bring their oak children's furnitures in two stains — light and dark. The furniture is appropriate for indoor use and is safe for any type of flooring. "It's dowel-pegged and kreg-jigged," says Alois in 'wood-worker speak' that basically means the furniture is practically indestructible. "I can stand on this chair," he nods. "It will not break."

It will take no time for market-ers to imagine all of the fun little ones will have at the table and chairs sets — from crafting to tea

parties to homework to holiday games. The rockers are just as darling, and Alois reports that "you can never tell" which will sell faster each year. Chairs may be purchased separately from tables, so that customers may choose what works best for them. The Fests take a limited number of special orders each year.

Find Alois, Joey and their wonderful furniture just inside the entrance of the American Legion. "The Legion is the most convenient place. I love it down there," says Joey.

The Fests sell out of their furniture every year at Christkindlmarkt. Last year they nearly sold out within the first two hours!



Folks interested in acquiring one or more of their pieces should head to the Legion early. The Fests are happy to ship orders, having shipped as far away as Arizona for market-ers in the past.

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