



Kringle Workshops Expands Focus on Custom Handmade Wooden Toys

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Kringle Workshops is placing renewed attention on custom handmade wooden toys for families seeking designs that are not part of its standard collection. The small Minnesota workshop, operated by Tom Bethke, has long noted that customers may request a unique wooden toy when an existing model does not match a specific idea, and that practice remains part of the company's work in its Lake Elmo home workshop.

Custom requests are considered when they can be built to the same construction standards used across the regular lineup. Toys are made from woods such as pine, oak, and birch, assembled with water-based glue and wooden dowels, sanded smooth with rounded edges, and left unfinished for a natural surface. Each piece receives a wood-burned Kringle Elf logo. Finished orders will have the option to include a Certificate of Authenticity as an optional add-on, with an option to have a personalized note from Santa.

The standard collection continues to provide a starting point for many custom conversations. Existing designs include the Pickup Truck & Horse Trailer with dual rear wheels and a pivoting trailer ramp, the Wooden Pickup Truck / Camper with Boat with a removable camper and boat on a trailer, the Wooden Bobcat Skid Steer with a working bucket, and the Wooden Fire Truck with a ladder that raises, lowers, spins, and extends.

Aviation pieces include the Wooden Racing Airplane, measuring 19 inches long with a 14.5-inch wingspan and a spinning propeller, and the Wooden Biplane Toy, measuring 16 inches long and 8.5 inches tall with a 14.5-inch wingspan and a spinning propeller. Farm and work vehicles such as the Tractor, Combine, Logging Truck, Dump Truck, Excavator, Train, Garbage Truck, Flatbed Tow Truck with Car, and Classic Hot Rod Car remain part of the shop's range. Toys are recommended for children ages three and older because of size and small parts.

Tom Bethke, founder and craftsman of Kringle Workshops, described how custom work fits the shop's process. "If a family has a wooden toy in mind that is not already in the collection, the request is reviewed to see whether it can be designed and built with the same materials, joints, and safety details used on every other piece," said Bethke. "The goal is a toy that can be played with, not only displayed, and that can last long enough to be passed along."

Bethke's background informs that approach. He learned woodworking from his father, later studied design and three-dimensional sculpture, and worked as a designer and builder for live theater and as a display artist for corporate events and trade shows. He has also served as a professional Santa Claus for more than 47 years. He has said he still has wooden toys his father made for him. Those experiences shape a one-person process that typically moves from research and sketches to full-scale drawings, templates, a prototype, and then individual hand-building, sanding, branding, inspection, and packaging.

The unfinished surfaces on many toys allow families to leave the wood natural or apply a finish later. The Pickup Truck / Camper with Boat, for example, is offered unfinished and includes a note that a finish on the boat is suggested before water play. That same unfinished approach appears across much of the collection and can apply to custom pieces as well.

Bethke added a second observation on why custom work continues. "Many requests begin with a child who already has a favorite type of vehicle or a family that wants a toy connected to a particular story," he said. "The workshop remains small so each piece, whether from the regular line or a custom design, can be handled from start to finish by the same person."

Kringle Workshops presents itself as an American-made, home-based operation that emphasizes durability, battery-free play, and toys intended for active use. Free shipping is offered on all orders. Customer comments published on the company's site frequently mention construction quality, communication during the order process, and the way toys become part of family play over time.

The shop's stated purpose remains consistent: to craft wooden toys that can withstand years of use and, with care, become heirlooms. Custom work is treated as an extension of that purpose rather than a separate

product line, with the same attention to joints, sanding, and materials applied to every accepted request.

Kringle Workshops is a small business specializing in handmade wooden toys. Owner Tom Bethke crafts each item in his home workshop using natural woods and traditional techniques. The toys are built for durability, safety, and imaginative play, making them suitable for children ages three and up as lasting family pieces.

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For more information about Kringle Workshops, contact the company here: Kringle Workshops Tom Bethke 651-552-7709 Kringleworkshops@comcast.net

Kringle Workshops

Kringle Workshops crafts wooden toys ready to be passed down from generation to generation. All products are made by a small business, right here in America.

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