

ask the expert

For Love of the Craft

OLDE MILL OWNER JULIE DAVIS-GERARD explains the elements that go into creating custom, heirloom-quality furniture.

WH&G: What should people look for when buying furniture?

“Solid wood” doesn’t always mean solid wood. Be sure to use this test: give it a good rap. Solid wood sounds dense, not hollow. Push down on the floor of a drawer. There shouldn’t be any give. Look for dovetailed corners and mortise-and-tenon joinery. (A mortise is a recess cut into a piece of wood to accept a tenon, which is a tongue at the end of a board that fits into the recess to make a strong joint.)

If you’re looking at the surface of a piece of furniture, follow the line of the grain across the top horizontally. At the

edge, the grain’s direction shouldn’t change. If it does, you can assume it is not solid wood.



WH&G: How long have you been in the business?

I started working at this store 17 years ago. I immediately grew to love the quality of the furniture and the ability to work so closely with the manufacturers. After learning the business from the ground up and realizing my talents were well suited, I purchased the business and changed the name to Olde Mill Furniture (formerly Oak Barn of Ashburn).

WH&G: Why did you change the name to Olde Mill Furniture?

This name represents the 100-year-old mill that houses the business.



Photographs by Omar Salinas



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WH&G: How does Olde Mill differ from other stores like it?

First and foremost, it starts with walking into the mill. You will feel the warmth of the store, see the beauty of the furniture in a cozy atmosphere, and be greeted by our friendly staff. You can't walk past our furniture without wanting to touch it.

WH&G: Do you offer in-home design consultation?

Yes, that has become a growing part of our business. We'll come onsite to help, whether you're re-designing your entire home or simply trying to tie a few pieces to an existing decor. We go beyond the furniture, helping to choose paint colors, fabrics for curtains, rugs, and accessories.

If someone wants to rework a part of the interior, we will make a checklist to help them prioritize what they should change and when to do it. We make lots of suggestions—especially on how to reuse things they currently have.

WH&G: Are you able to offer custom furniture to your customers?

The demand for custom furniture is increasing rapidly, and we want to be able to meet that. Customers can bring in a photo or have us sketch a piece of furniture to fit their exact needs. Our quality craftsmen can produce almost any piece—in any wood and any color you desire. Creating the exact piece someone wants is as exciting to us as it is to our customers.

WH&G: Which manufacturers do you work with?

Although we work with over 40 manufacturers, the majority of our solid wood pieces are crafted by the Amish and Mennonites, who have generations of experience creating high-quality furniture. This allows us to offer truly well-made pieces with lifetime warranties, which we gladly explain to our clients. We have developed great relationships thanks to many years working together and the values of hard work and loyalty that we share. 🌹