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George A. Olsen, Jr.

George A. Olsen, Jr., the “G” of GTO Woodturning, learned the craft of wood turning largely through experimentation and reading after attending few workshops and club meetings. Although he had spent most of his career in other endeavors (mechanics and excavation), this artistry has brought unique satisfaction. Wood turning was practiced in ancient times, as people discovered they could form useful instruments on primitive lathes. Many lathe-turned cooking and hunting tools have been uncovered by archeologists.

In the 21st century, people have rediscovered the satisfaction of holding and using tactically satisfying wood tools for cooking and entertaining, and even the pleasure of writing with a pen formed from wood, or wearing lathe-turned wood earrings. George has invented many of the tools he uses to form his products. Reflecting the early roots of turning, many of the woods he turns are locally sourced, like maple, ash, cherry, and even staghorn sumac.

His pepper and salt mills, French rolling pins, spatulas, and flippers have been well



George works on a spalted maple peppermill. Photo by Andy Ryan Photography, courtesy of the artist.

received at craft shows and are popular items at the Gallery of New York Artists at the New York Folklore Society and guilds where his work is shown. Bottle stoppers for wine, oil and vinegars, as well as garden dibbles are appreciated for gifts.

George’s wife, Theresa, handles the marketing and orders, and the web site www.gtoewoodturning.com. You can meet them at finer art and craft shows in the Northeast during show season. ▼



Above: George checking a finished Butternut Fruit Bowl. Photo by Andy Ryan Photography, courtesy of the artist.

Left: Visit the Gallery of New York Artists at the New York Folklore Society at 129 Jay Street in Schenectady or online at www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/gifts.html#utensil to purchase handcrafted items by George Olsen. Photo by Colin D. Young Photography, courtesy of the artist.

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