

## Crazy about copper

The attractive metal can be used in a number of ways indoors and out.

Nzong Xiong  
The Fresno Bee  
Originally published 2007-04-12

It all started **about** three years ago with a small sink.

Kimberly Holland and her husband, David, of Fresno were renovating their kitchen, and she had searched and searched for a sink for her kitchen island.

"I didn't like the porcelain sinks available at the time," says Holland, a stay-at-home mother.

Not finding what she wanted at local stores, she went online and found a handmade **copper** sink from Mexico at a low price. **About** seven months later, she went back to the same Web site and ordered a custom, farmhouse-style kitchen sink. That order was followed by another for two **copper** panels for the cabinets above the bar area.

Then, **copper** products — many of which were gifts from friends — started appearing in and around her home. **Copper** teakettles. **Copper** hanging pots. A **copper** window box. She also has faux-**copper** items, too.

"As [real **copper**] gets more popular and expensive, I've seen it in all kinds of different things," she says.

While **copper** has been used for gutters and pipes, the material also can be used in interesting ways inside and outside of the house, as Holland, 36, has discovered. At least two local metalworkers also are helping shine the light on **copper**.

"The first thing people are attracted to is the appearance" of **copper**, says Eric Montgomery, who started The Metal Shoppe in Clovis with his wife, Debra, **about** three and a half years ago. "It's kind of timeless. It reflects old-time craftsmanship."

If left to the elements outdoors, **copper's** brownish-gold glow will weather. In some areas, the material will acquire a patina, but not necessarily in the central San Joaquin Valley, Eric Montgomery says.

"It won't turn green here in the Valley," he says. "It'll turn brown, like an old penny. We don't have the salt or humidity like at the coast here."

When customers do want the patina color, the Montgomerys will force **copper** to patina by applying chemicals or vinegar and salt.

The patina "protects it from fingerprints, but it can still age," Debra Montgomery says.

**Copper** can be heated with a torch, cooled in water and then worked on while still soft and hot. There are several ways coppersmiths can create designs on **copper**, such as chasing, where depressed patterns are formed from the front.

Another is repoussé, where a raised pattern is made by hammering, punching or chiseling the metal from the back. Additional details can be made on the front with chasing.

"We can do this on [any] metal, but it anneals, or softens, really well with **copper**," Debra Montgomery says.

While **copper** can be used indoors or out, it doesn't work well with some other metals. "Aluminum or galvanized steel will corrode the **copper** in a short period of time," Eric Montgomery says.

Holland discovered this when she put an aluminum pan from a rice cooker in the larger kitchen sink overnight and the pot left a black ring where it reacted with the **copper**. "You scrub at it and it comes off."

But **copper**, real **copper**, doesn't come cheap. "It's four times the price of steel," Eric Montgomery says. "It's not something everybody can pay for, but if a person wants it, it's here."

For example, one item the Montgomerys often get requests for is a custom kitchen hood. Don't be surprised if it costs \$3,000 to \$10,000.

For her small sink, Holland paid less than \$300 and **about** \$700 for the larger kitchen sink. The cabinet panels were **about** \$400 total.

With raw **copper** in demand, Holland has noticed the material also has caught the eyes of thieves. Already, a **copper** watering can she had in her front yard has gone missing. Since then, "I've been focusing on **copper** [items] that are a little more heavy," she says.

Besides sinks and kitchen hoods, **copper** has found its way into homes as backsplashes,