

I am lucky to have Swedish ingenuity close at hand. If something can possibly be made or repaired by unusual and creative means, my money goes on Runo's ability. We have a lot of "one-of-a-kind" items in use here in our "one-of-a-kind" cabin. And next Sunday morning, when we light the first Advent candle of the Christmas season, a rather unusual candle holder will be put to use.

In fact, it will also be a one season candle holder. We did have a copper colored metal holder for the Advent candles, but years took their toll, and it finally was beyond repair. We talked about buying another similar holder, but it is just one more thing to store from season to season.

So, a few years ago we robbed—or borrowed, really—a nice straight piece of stove wood from the pile. Runo bored four candle-diameter holes in the stick of wood, flattened the bottom with the axe, and an Advent candle holder was born. When the season was over, it served nicely to get the fire going again on a cold morning, the accumulated wax being an added benefit. Since then, we have just made a new holder for every Christmas. The wood has varied from year to year. White birch, maple, ash—they have all had a turn. And this week, we will poke through the wood pile to find a suitable piece for this year's model.

And then, there's the nine-candle holder we hang over the table on Christmas Eve. It started life as a cow chain. A broken chain was not something to be discarded, and eventually, some welding and repurposing of other parts led to its new existence as a sort of chandelier. Runo fastened the three-chain device to a ring of metal that was in the scrap pile, welded on short pieces of pipe and large metal washers, and painted the whole thing with black barbecue paint. The lighting of the candles has become a Christmas Eve tradition.

And, just tonight, I regained use of my favorite little stainless steel teakettle. I had depended on it for several years, usually to serve as a teapot, since it had a much better pouring spout than any teapot we have had. It did not drip. Several months ago, the handle broke. We thought we could fasten a new handle to the little brackets that held it to the pot, but one of them was also loose. So, tonight, Runo fixed my teapot. He removed the brackets and drilled holes on each side of the pot for fastening new brackets of some kind. He flattened two pieces of copper tubing, made a wooden handle from a piece scrap pine, screwed the handle to the copper and the copper to the teapot. I now have a one-of-a-kind, never to be replicated, teapot. My old favorite is back on the job.

It is almost worth it to have something break just to see if Runo can come up with some creative way to fix it. It does not always work, but, more often than not, he succeeds.

