

And another thing...

By
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ACKERMAN

Garden State Made

New Jersey is busy. We're making things, and making things happen. From stilettos to nighties to mango-flavored rum, New Jersey is where it's at for small manufacturers and entrepreneurs. Whether the economy has forced us to be more creative or Jersey-ites are just a tad more inventive and spirited than the rest, we are the proud home of over 700,000 small businesses. While the entrepreneur dream can be intriguing, the process can be exhausting, as anyone who's gone that route knows very well. Zach Brinley, founder of Brinley Gold Rum, sums it up perfectly: "It's complete freedom and complete slavery." Here's a small sampling of our home-grown wares:

SELVE

We've all seen the perfect bag, except, well, wouldn't it be more perfect if the handle were darker, and well, maybe if the lining were fuschia? Enter Red Bank-based Selve, a custom handbag and shoe manufacturer. The super-cool website lets you obsess over zillions of combinations. selve.com; 732-747-4000.



Brinley Gold Rum

Produced in St. Kitts, but owned and operated by entrepreneur and lifelong Montclair resident Zach Brinley, this beverage line aims to be "the best tasting flavored rum in the world." The premium line features vanilla, coffee, lime, coconut, and mango. Aarr! (That's Pirate for "me likes me rum.") brinleygoldrum.com; 973-227-7881.



Elegant Roots

While vacationing in the Sierra Madre, the beautiful local crafts inspired Hopewell resident Richard Speedwell to create a business that teaches native artisans modern techniques and then brings the hand-crafted goodies (like this beaded necklace by Julio Pagliani) to the U.S. market. It's a win for the locals, a win for his socially responsible team, and a win for us. elegantroots.com; 800-891-8194.

Vie and Somn

There's eco, there's super-eco, and then there's certified biodynamic cotton from a "closed loop" organic farm that Liz Gamal of West Orange uses for the stunningly simple Vie and Somn sleepwear collection. This soft-as-a-cloud synthetic-free nightwear is as wonderful to look at as it is to wear. We're dreaming already... vieandsomn.com; 917-689-1007.



BILLYKIRK

Modern yet crafty men's leather accessories are hand-tooled in the Amish tradition and are brought to hip stores like Barney's and Fred Segal by brothers Chris and Kirk Bray. Billykirk's base of operations is a Jersey City warehouse loft. billykirk.com; 201-222-9092.



Penalty Pads

Is remote hogging a ticketable offense? Well, thanks to Morristown resident Ike Eichen, it is now. So is Eating the Last Cookie and of course the unforgivable Diary Snooping. Slightly hokey, yes, yet strangely comforting in that retro oversized-flocked-Hallmark card kind of way. penaltypads.com; 888-4-IKESTAR.

