

How to Make an Atom Bomb While Your Wife's Away

by Con Chapman

The wife's away this weekend, an opportunity for me to make some of the dishes she bans because they stink up the kitchen; linguini and clam sauce, cedar planked salmon, weapons-grade plutonium.

Just like that guy in Angelholm, Sweden who tried to build a thermo-nuclear bomb in his kitchen. He got caught when he called the Swedish Radiation Authority to ask if there were any laws against testing a homemade atom bomb in his back yard.

Duh. I guess nobody ever told him the first rule of Stupid Male Do-It-Yourself Tricks: It is easier to ask for forgiveness than permission.

Like many men, I've undertaken several large-scale projects when my wife wasn't around to hinder my efforts with carping criticism, upraised eyebrows, exasperated sighs. I'll share one with you: Needing a piece of wood to fill the gap between a screen door and a spring hasp (if you don't know what that is, I can't explain it to you),

I dismantled a bookcase, removed the back, stacked the books on the floor, and cut off a teensy-tiny piece of fiberboard, solving that problem. In the process, however, I created another; I now have the story of my handiwork thrown back in my face at every social event we attend, as if I'd done something—foolish.

"And when I flip this switch, all life on earth comes to a screeching halt!"

I've stocked up for my bomb manufacturing surreptitiously, a sort of mini-Manhattan project. Thankfully, most of the materials needed to build the bomb that's right for you are on sale at your local hardware superstore. Instructions? The miracle of the internet—another military spin-off with civilian uses—puts easy-to-follow directions to in-home nuclear explosions just a mouse-click away!

I start with the Uranium 235 isotope. I've bought a twenty-five pound bag—should be enough. The recipe I found on the web varies slightly from the traditional version in the Fannie Farmer Boston Cookbook—hers calls for turmeric, which will impart a rich, custard-like yellow color to your mushroom cloud. As a pending member of the community of nuclear nations I don't want to draw too much attention to myself at first, so I stick with the recommendation of my anonymous source on the internet.



"U-235? Uh, I think it's over in Aisle 5 with the insecticides."

"Pipe uranium hexafluoride into cylinder of a gas centrifuge, then spin at high speed." I had decided not to spring for a centrifuge—a good one can run you \$825—until I determined whether I liked atom bomb-etry enough as a hobby to stick with it. I rummage in the pantry to see which of our many underused countertop appliances might do the trick.

Let's see, there's the yogurt maker that has served as an impromptu spice rack for a quarter of a century. The panini maker, the rice cooker—nope, I need more of a muscle appliance.

Ah, the Cuisinart—just the thing! I pick through the detachable blades—slicer, shredder, puree. Where's the—here it is; centrifugal isotope separator.

I pour in the uranium, check the plastic lid to make sure it's firmly secured, and let 'er rip. I'd forgotten how handy these things are; you can't buy this stuff from Iran because of school-marmish "trading with the enemy" laws, and enriched uranium that comes out of North Korea is about what you'd expect from a dictatorship run by a cult leader who wears platform heels; you don't order out for Korean food, do you?

What would have taken me literally hours to produce by hand is the work of a minute. I use a plastic spatula to separate the heavier U-238 isotopes on the outside from the lighter, fluffier U-235

isotopes in the center. You can put these aside and use them for cake frosting; Mother-in-Law's day is the fourth Sunday in October.

Kew!

Now for the explosives to start the chain reaction. You'll need a hundred pounds of TNT to git 'er done, as my redneck friends like to say. If you're not comfortable mixing volatile materials, contact your local high school chemistry teacher who may be looking for freelance work due to budget cuts.

No nuclear explosion is complete without a detonator and I've selected an ultra-safe, radio-controlled servo mechanism that . . .

*End of draft freelance article found on Upper Volta Glacier,
Westland, New Zealand.*

