

EXTRA, EXTRA: AUTHOR TRIES CANDLE-MAKING  
Has New Claim to Flame  
By Christin Brecher

Stella Wright, the hero detective in my series, the Nantucket Candle Maker Mysteries, was born to make candles.

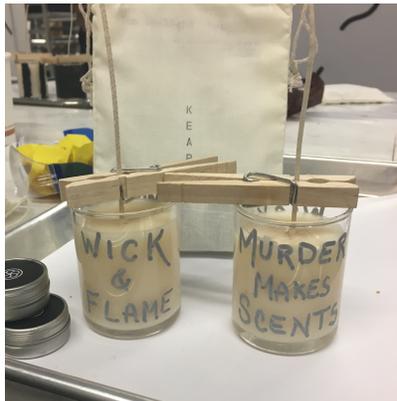
I was born to buy them. That is, until I met her.

After spending time with Stella during early days of the series, I became eager to try her craft. She has that effect on people. Stella worked at the island's Whaling Museum during high school and was drawn to Nantucket's production from whale oils of the whitest and brightest candles, which lit the finest homes around the world in the late 17<sup>th</sup> / early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. As a youngster, she also helped her mother run a small perfume shop on town's Center Street, now the location of her own store, the Wick & Flame. These days, she crafts beautifully colored and uniquely scented candles I wish we could all enjoy.

Inspired by this multi-talented woman, I discovered Keap, a small candle company based out of Brooklyn which runs workshops at their headquarters. When I arrived for an evening class, I joined a group of enthusiasts of different ages, skills and backgrounds, including a young couple on a date (hope those two made it because that was a cute date.) Everyone wore a smile, which grew wider when we were offered wine and pastries.

In one night, I learned the basics of heating wax to a fragrance-friendly temperature (~150\*), and how to succeed in the tricky but imperative step of keeping the wick straight (clothespins!) We were invited to choose from many of Keeps beautiful scents, mixing them into our melted wax, and then pouring the mixture into small votives. I was so proud of the candles I made, I went home, right to Amazon, and bought a lifetime's worth of supplies.

Photos from Keap:



Clothespins to hold the wick straight!



Picking out scents.

Then, I returned full-time to murder until this morning, when I completed Stella's third adventure! In celebration, I finally opened the boxes of candle supplies. Maybe it was the wine, but as it turns out I had purchased soy, bee and paraffin waxes, but no fragrances. Nor did I have pastries on hand. Undaunted, however, I dedicated the morning to investigating the properties of wax.

I have a few conclusions from this DIY candle celebration:

- 1) All of my waxes needed about the same amount of time to melt, are a similar shade of white, and so far have cast the same amount of light. I wonder if one holds fragrances better?
- 2) My Beeswax candle fell out of the glass holder while the others did not.
- 3) Making candles is seriously fun.
- 4) I can easily make these as gifts.
- 5) I'm glad I gave Stella the surname Wright, the name of the whale from which Nantucketers harvested spermaceti oil to make its famous candles.



Final products, all dressed up with Murder's No Votive Confidence stickers! That cute shelf-sitter is of Nantucket's library.



Artsy photo of my wicks.