

culture

Sex Toys 101

Everything you always wanted to know about packing heat but were afraid to ask

by Julie Sabatier

Brandy Wouldstra likes to talk about sex. A lot. She's a petite woman with long, dark hair and a wave tattoo disappearing up her left shirtsleeve.

Wouldstra, 32, has been working at the woman-owned and -operated It's My Pleasure sex shop for the past eight years. In that time, she's taught classes on sex toys, anal sex, the G spot and female ejaculation, sadomasochism and strap-on sex.

Sex Toys 101 is the basic beginners class, and it meets once every six weeks. It is co-ed, along with all of the other classes offered in the small, white house that is home to It's My Pleasure. (The store's location is a little hard to find if you don't know what you're looking for. Expect a white picket fence, not a storefront.) The class is strictly instructional, and everyone keeps their clothes on.

January's class drew an intimate group of five students—a middle-aged straight couple who drove down from Vancouver, Wash., two lesbians (friends, not a couple) and a reporter typing notes on her laptop. Before class, we checked out the leftover Christmas stock, such as stiletto stockings and X-rated after-dinner mints that say "Merry Fucking Christmas" on the wrapper. The store also has an array of books, DVDs, toys, lotions, oils, etc. as well as prominently displayed Pride stickers, copies of the Lesbian & Gay Yellow Pages, candles, incense, postcards and novelty items such as sticky notes in the shape of boobs or cock/balls and "penis sucker" lollipops.

Our instructor wore a tiny vibrator on her pointer finger and kept turning it on and off as she launched into a history lesson about woman-owned sex shops and It's My Pleasure specifically. (The store has been around for 16 years and at its current location for nine.) Wouldstra also went into an extensive litany of laws that govern the sex toy industry around the country. In Texas, it's illegal to possess six or more "adult products," and Florida just passed a law requiring sex businesses to be 1,000 feet from any home, school or church. "God bless Portland because we are just," she dropped her voice to a whisper, "dirty."

Then it was time to talk about condoms. "I have a bit of a condom fetish," Wouldstra confessed eagerly. "[It] sounds a little weird to some people coming from a lesbian, but my wife actually has a bigger condom fetish than I do. To me, it's a practical consideration. It means I don't have to get up and scrub the toy."

She unwrapped several condoms, inflated them and passed them around, explaining the special features of each variety.

Before moving on to talk about vibrators, Wouldstra passed out paper towels and circulated many varieties of lubrication—water-based, silicone-based and clitoral-stimulating gels—for people to try on their fingers.

Finally, it was time to discuss vibrators, what Wouldstra calls "the little workhorses of the sex toy world." The show-and-tell included the Fuko-Oku

finger vibe and the O-Bullet (\$10), which both run on watch batteries, plastic shaft-style vibes (\$20), G spot stimulators (\$27-\$30), Egg or bullet-type vibrators (\$32-\$34) and dual-action vibes like the rabbit (\$80-\$90), which offer clit and G spot stimulation at the same time. Wouldstra also brought out a few plug-in models, like the giant and powerful Acu-vibe (\$60).

She encouraged everyone to find a toy they are comfortable with but warned against using it the same way all the time. "You can wind up getting stuck [in a rut] and not being able to come any other way," she said.

Next, the class looked at dildos made of silicone or glass (the only kinds carried at It's My Pleasure). They ranged in size and form from the Sparkly "Diva" (\$48) to the blue, bulbous "Jane Wa" (also \$48) to the huge, cream-colored "Outlaw" complete with veins and balls (\$115).

We also looked at harnesses to house these phallic objects. Wouldstra strapped on thigh and pelvic harnesses made of leather, denim and the ever-popular recycled bicycle tire tubes (\$43). "People squeal and jump up and down when they see that," she said.

Wouldstra also explained how selling dildos and harnesses has exploded her own sexual stereotypes. "A lot of women who are buying harnesses and dildos are using them to fuck men. It's very big in Portland," she said, "and guess what? Lots of lesbians want super-realistic-looking cocks, and some straight guys are so in love with cock that they want something super-realistic even if it's going in their own butt. You can't make assumptions."



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No one seemed to mind that class ran over almost an hour and a half or that Wouldstra skipped over butt plugs (the champagne corks of the sex toy world). "I'm really glad I came," said Trisha Rice, 47, the female half of the straight couple from Vancouver. "I've got a lot of ideas now," she added, rubbing her hands together and smiling at her partner. **10**

It's My Pleasure presents SEX TOYS 101 from 7 to 8:30 p.m. April 10 at 3106 N.E. 64th Ave. The cost is \$10. Register at 503-280-8080 by April 7.

JULIE SABATIER is a Portland writer and radio producer. She cannot honestly say that her interest in sex toys is purely professional.

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