

Bloody Hell

Alternative period products for the adventurous among us **BY AMY SCHNEIDER**

It has always struck me as one of the great injustices of womanhood — the monthly bloodbath from a body part that is normally reserved for sexytime (not a baby corridor just yet, thank you very much). I try to tell myself that it's some great honor, an ancient rite of femininity that brings me closer to nature and the goddess within us all.

But that kind of bullshit isn't terribly reassuring when you've bled through your pants and flushed your last tampon down the toilet.

According to BuzzFeed's "How Metal Is Your Period?" online quiz, my period is "very fucking metal." I consider this a fine achievement. But to obtain a perfect score and prove that my period is indeed the most hardcore of periods, I needed to upgrade my menstruation supplies, from paltry tampons and maxi pads to reusable menstrual cups and sea sponges.

Yes, you read that right: sea sponges.

But I'll get back to that later. First, let's talk about the menstrual cup, which, according to Planned Parenthood, is "an easy-to-use, safe and ecofriendly alternative to pads and tampons." Their brand, Lunette, is a light blue, acorn-shaped silicone cup, flexible enough to accommodate the wriggling it takes to place it correctly.

Carolyn Moore, a nurse practitioner at Planned Parenthood of Southwestern Oregon, says, "Most women who use menstrual cups really like them. They're safe, effective and earth-friendly."

The Diva Cup is one of the more popular brands, and the colorful packaging distracts you from the fact that this device is basically a leak bucket for blood. To use it, simply squeeze the cup between your fingers so that it folds shut, then wedge it in. The cup should expand once inside.

A few tips from friends about using this thing: Make sure to push it up far enough to prevent leaking. It's not pretty when the deluge hits and you're not ready.

Also, be careful when using the cup

in public restrooms. Getting it in and out is a bit tricky and messier than dropping a tampon into the toilet, so plan ahead. It's probably not yet socially acceptable to wash out your menstrual cup in a public restroom sink, bloody hands and all — dumping your cup out in the toilet and rinsing it with a bottle of water might be the way to go.



If the Diva Cup doesn't appeal to you, a quick web search shows that there's also the Mooncup, Lily Cup, Fleurcup and MeLuna.

I'm not really into all the references to lunar cycles and phases of the moon. I'm not sure why a woman's baby-making system has anything to do with a giant chunk of rock that orbits our planet.

Then again, I do see the appeal in envisioning oneself as some kind of primal, badass she-wolf.

In any case, if allusions to heavenly bodies aren't your thing, people have mined the depths of the ocean to find absorptive materials. Sea sponges like Sea Pearls function just about as you'd imagine: Boil to clean, push it on

in, remove when full, wring out in sink, rinse, repeat.

I found the Diva Cup and Sea Pearls at The Kiva, but you can get them online and at other establishments around town with an eco, womanly hippie ethos.

Just try not to imagine sticking SpongeBob SquarePants in your lady business, and you'll be fine. ■

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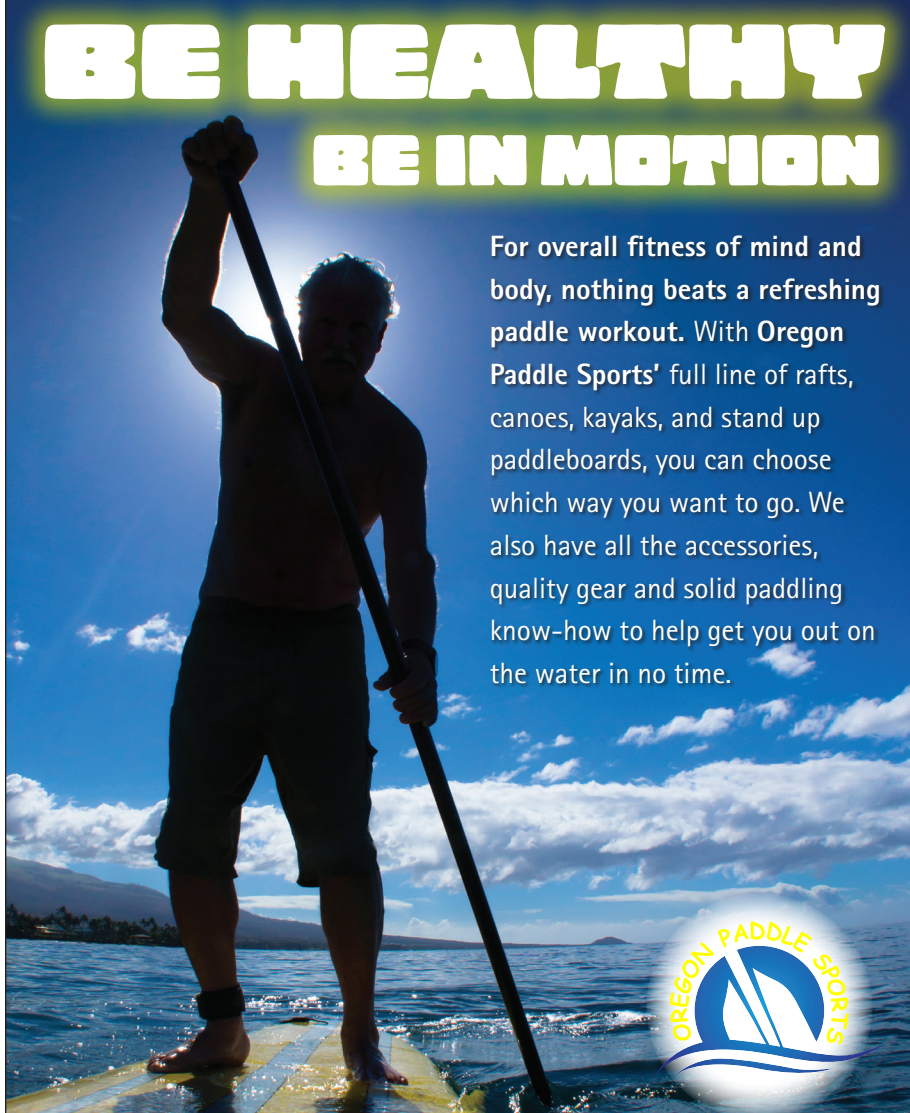
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