

FLORIDA TODAY

The lineup

Monday: Great escapes
Tuesday: Outdoors
Wednesday: Prep sports
Today: Getting out
Friday: Outdoors
Saturday: Golf
Sunday: Trivia



**Mark
DeCotis**

*Getting
out*

Bicycles making the move to bamboo

Through the years, bicycle frames have progressed from steel to aluminum to titanium to carbon and now to bamboo.

That's right, bamboo. Calfee Design of La Selva Beach, Calif., is marketing bamboo bicycles in custom, pro or triathlon models. They aren't cheap, ranging from \$2,695 to \$3,195 for the frame only.

The Calfee Web site — www.calfeedesign.com — is touting its bamboo product as having several features that set it apart from the usual frame materials including, among others, crash tolerance and looks.

The site calls the bike a work of art.

Until I can pass the hat to raise enough scratch to buy one of the frames, I'll have to take their word for it.

Craig Calfee, who runs the company, had plenty of good things to say about the bikes and how the whole thing started.

"The first time I thought about building a bicycle out of bamboo was when I was playing with my dog Luna, she's a stick dog, and she came up with a piece of bamboo in her mouth wanting to play the game we usually play," Calfee said.

"I chase her for the stick and she's still holding onto it because she's part pit bull. And I grabbed the stick and started swinging her around by the stick and she's holding on by her teeth, which were gouging into this piece of bamboo. I thought the bamboo would just break. I was very surprised that it didn't break and at that moment I thought, 'This stuff is amazing. I should build a bike out of it.'"

Calfee, who has been making bamboo bikes since 1997, gets the Giant Black Bamboo from a local nursery in California and from Japan. Once he crafts the wood into a bike, the results are astounding, he said.

"Bamboo is a great material for vibration dampening. It's very similar to carbon fiber in how it absorbs shock, and it's fairly light and fairly strong."

Calfee said the initial reaction people have to bamboo is to question its strength. Once they ride them, well, they are converted.

"They are fanatics," he said. "They just love them. They tend to ride more often."

Calfee said bamboo is making inroads into elite markets — a bamboo triathlon bike was ridden in two recent Ironman World Championship races in Kona, Hawaii. But he doesn't expect bamboo to replace standard bicycle materials in the mainstream market.

"Well, it might replace standard bicycle materials in Third World countries because it's pretty highly available," he said.

That said, Calfee has no plan to stop making bamboo bikes.

"It's a wonderful ride," he said.