

Starter Kit

Baby-making just got intimate. **BY YANA TALLON-HICKS**

Let's be honest: There's just nothing sexy or spontaneous about the lesbian baby-making process—ovulation calendars, sterile doctor's offices, 90-degree leg positioning and, no matter how many candles you light, a turkey baster is still a turkey baster. Well, Stephanie Berman has made it so that you never have to look at that turkey baster sideways again.

The Semenette is the first high-end product of its kind that's intended for home insemination. It's a strap-on, user-friendly dildo that has been specially engineered to ejaculate sperm—a product that family-oriented lesbians have been begging for, for years. So much more than just an upgraded Thanksgiving utensil, the Semenette is a realistic-looking, modestly sized dildo with special tubing running through the middle that deposits sperm to the cervix with a few squeezes of its removable outer pump.

Because creating a high quality product was of the highest importance to Berman, the Semenette is made from medical-grade, toxin-free silicone, and in designing it she has used all her personal and professional experience with same-sex insemination efforts.

Berman is the owner of a women's health clinic, and her inspiration to make the Semenette came from her clients' desire for a more intimate gayby-making experience, as well as her own imperfect attempts at impregnating her wife.

"The first time we tried [home insemination], it was literally like a National Geographic experience," she laughs. "Not one thing was romantic about it, even though we tried really hard to make it so. We also tried bringing my wife to the doctor's office, but everything there revolved around her, and, even as her partner, I felt

like the odd man out."

While sperm banks and doctors' visits work for some women, many find this process to be invasive, expensive and emotionally sterile. Not only can insemination at home save you thousands of dollars, but it has an almost identical success rate (5–25 percent) as a pricey trip to your M.D. Though the Semenette may not render your doctor completely useless (Berman cautions, "This isn't a medical device, this is a toy that mimics intercourse and ejaculation."), it provides an affordable first stop on the often-long lesbian road to pregnancy.

Though the Semenette is practical, Berman says her strongest motivation in creating it was to increase the level of intimacy between same-sex partners who are trying to conceive. "The Semenette allows both partners to be involved, and gives same-sex couples the same ability that heterosexual couples have. Using the Semenette feels more authentic, in a sense, because the nonconceiving partner actually gets to feel like they're making a baby and actually getting their partner pregnant. The Semenette provides a level of intimacy that's on your terms, and I feel like this is what most same-sex couples want—to feel like this is your baby, whom you've created, not the popsicle the doctor inseminated at the office. There's nothing like this on the market.

"I think, in general, sex toys as well as same-sex partners having families have been taboo topics," says Berman. "But now our president is supporting gay rights, and there are TV shows that are highlighting same-sex families, so there's a shift in acceptance. I don't think people have thought there was a need for this, and the way I see it is that I saw a problem and created a solution." (thesemenette.com) ●



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