

Midcentury cookware is marvelous again

By TRACEE M. HERBAUGH
Associated Press

If you want to freshen up your kitchen, look no further than grandma's old casserole dishes.

Vintage kitchenware is back in style — pieces from the mid-20th century painted with flowers, bright colors and specific functions, such as bracketed chip and dip bowls or four-piece refrigerator storage sets.

"I've always been an old soul and loved anything old," said Megan Telfer, a collector of vintage dishes, salt and pepper shakers, cookie jars and "a little bit of everything." The 26-year-old parole officer from the Dallas area said this hobby started with family.

Her grandmother gave her mother a green and white Pyrex "Spring Blossom" mixing bowl. "That's when my interest was piqued," Telfer said.

Three years later, she has more than 300 pieces of vintage Pyrex, displayed on three large bookcases. Her 5-year-old daughter has some vintage Pyrex, too.

"We don't use 90% of it," Telfer said. "I display it."

Some collectors buy vintage dishware to try to resell it at a profit, while others are in it for nostalgia.

"It reminds them of their mothers, aunts, grandmothers," said Hope Chudy, owner of Downstairs at Felton Antiques in Waltham, Massachusetts.

A year of lockdowns



Tracee Herbaugh

Some of the vintage kitchenware available at a Waltham, Massachusetts antique shop.

because of the coronavirus pandemic has led to a surge in home cooking and time spent hanging out in the kitchen. Vintage cookware fits right into that homey, old-fashioned vibe.

There are lustrous chili bowls with handles and casserole dishes set on top of brass candle warmers. These are durable dishes, often smaller than modern serving pieces, that can go from freezer to oven to table. But collectors usually acquire them for enjoyment, not utility.

"It really sets your kitchen apart from others," said Victoria Aude, an interior designer in Canton, Massa-

chusetts. "It's not an item you can just buy off the shelf at Bloomingdale's."

The old dishes are also nice accents when decorating a room, said Atlanta-based interior designer Beth Halpern Brown. "They can add that quick pop of color," she said. "You can decorate a wall with them, or put one on display and change the space."

Coming first released a Pyrex dish in 1915. By the 1930s, Anchor Hocking Glass Corp. released its competitor brand Fire-King. But it's the kitchenware made between 1950 and 1980 that seem to be most popular right now.

Unable to use computers

Dear Annie: I am 74 years old. Back in my 40s, I tried learning an up-and-coming new skill: how to use a computer. Well, my attempts were fruitless. I could never figure it out. My wife tried teaching me, but I just couldn't get the hang of it. Later, my boss appointed a staff member (a computer "geek") to give me lessons. After weeks of trying with daily one-on-one instruction, he gave up trying to teach me. For me, it was nothing but frustration.

I seem to be an otherwise intelligent person. Fifty-three years ago, I even graduated college with honors. I did well with networking and keeping up with the latest news, until computers became ubiquitous.

I know dyslexia is a recognized learning disability that affects otherwise intelligent people who can't learn to read. Do I have something like that — something that is a recognized learning disability? Am I the only one in the world with this problem? — *In a Quagmire*

Dear Quagmire: I have a feeling there are other people out there who have dealt with this problem, and I hope to hear from some of them. In the meantime, if this is causing you distress, ask your doctor to refer you to a specialist who can screen for cognitive disabilities.

For what it's worth, far too many of us are overly dependent on our computers and smartphones. I don't mean to trivialize what you've gone through; I understand that it's been enormously frustrating. But you've likely been more present for life than many of us.

Dear Annie: I am a 57-year-old divorced woman. I have a 31-year-old son who is dealing with serious health consequences from

neglecting his Type 1 diabetes for the past 10 years. My heart breaks for him. His health keeps declining. He will have to start dialysis soon. He's lived with me for most of his adult life.

DEAR ANNIE



ANNIE LANE
Creators
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My problem is that he is extremely verbally abusive. This has been going on for about five years and seems to be getting worse. He throws tantrums, sometimes so intense that he ends up damaging things in the house.

I'm tired of dealing with this, and I fear it will just keep getting worse. He can't afford to live on his own with just \$800 monthly disability checks. I just can't deal with this anymore, but I can't afford to pay rent at a whole separate apartment for him.

Is it wrong for me to professionally convert my two-car garage to an apartment for him and make him live there? — *Worn-Down Mom*

Dear Worn-Down: If you're asking whether it's selfish of you to convert your garage into an apartment for your son — no, absolutely not. But it might be "wrong" for different reasons, in that it doesn't go far enough in creating space between you two.

You need to set healthy boundaries with your son, for both of your sakes. It's completely unacceptable for him to treat you so poorly. Also, it's not healthy for him to be in an environment where he can avoid the consequences of his actions. As psychologist Noelle Nelson put it: "Enabling is helping a person in a way that feeds the dysfunction. Helping is being there for someone in a way that does not support the dysfunction." I recommend reading Melody Beattie's "Codependent No More" and attending some meetings of a support group such as Families Anonymous before deciding on your next move.

Jo Adinolfi, a 62-year-old nurse from Shelton, Connecticut, collects Pyrex mixing bowls and stackable refrigerator sets, what collectors affectionately call "fridges." She started collecting and selling about 10 years ago and owns more than 2,000 pieces.

The mid-20th-century glass bowls and casserole dishes from brands like Fire-King and Pyrex haven't changed, but their prices have.

"The more people that collect, the higher the demand is, the more people are trying to source the right goods to be able to feed that request," said Stan Savellis, 42, of Sydney, Australia, who has collected vintage kitchenware since his teenage years and runs the online store That Retro Piece.

Television and social media have also generated interest. Series like "Wan-

daVision," "Firefly Lane," "The Marvelous Mrs. Maisel" and "Mad Men" all highlight midcentury kitchens and kitchenware.

And then there's social media too, said Vicki Matranga, the design programs coordinator for the International Housewares Association and author of the book "America at Home: A Celebration of Twentieth-Century Housewares."

"With everyone at home now, you can look at collections on Facebook or Instagram," she said.

In pre-pandemic days, vintage collectors would meet up at swaps. Now, people are buying and selling on eBay, Etsy, Facebook and other websites.

The rarest pieces have sold for thousands of dollars, such as the 1959 "Lucky in Love" covered casserole dish that Goodwill sold for \$5,994 in 2017.

Still, some enthusiasts simply like the vintage look and sentimentality.

"It goes with my house," said Ashley Linder, 37, of Lake Jackson, Texas.

Linder's vintage collection includes can openers from the 1950s, and they still work.

"Fortunately, I have the space to display most of it, though some are seasonal-use," she said.

One of her most treasured finds was a Pyrex "Pink Daisy 045" casserole dish on eBay. It was in great condition, still in the box.

"You don't come across a lot of pink pieces in the box," she said.

She paid \$300 for it and messaged the seller in hopes of finding out how it was so well preserved.

"The lady had bought an old farmhouse in Nebraska, and it was left there," she said. "It's an investment."

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