



BEAUTIFUL BOWLS. The Miya Company, a third-generation family business based in New York City, imports a wide range of Japanese tableware and gifts to the U.S. Pictured are bowls (top photo) and a plate (bottom photo) from the Miya Company. The indigo blue raindrops create a pleasing geometric pattern on the bowls, which can be used for rice, cereal, or soup. The plate features a Japanese thatch pattern, melding traditional and contemporary design. (Miya via AP)

Asian tableware: From zen to zany

By Kim Cook
The Associated Press

Japan, China, and Korea have a long history of creating beautiful table goods, from rustic stoneware to delicate ceramics, sleek lacquered items to whimsical serveware and utensils. The tableware is appearing more and more in decor stores on this side of the world as part of several trends: minimalism, globalism, eclecticism.

The Miya Company, based in New York City, imports a wide range of Japanese tableware and gifts. “We’re a third-generation family business that was started in the 1930s by my husband’s great uncle, Chosuke Miyahira,” says spokesperson Heidi Moon.

Miya was initially a flower shop, and then began offering tableware. Moon says its motto today is “friends don’t let friends use boring dishes,” and that whatever they sell has to be “beautiful, simple, and fun.”

In the utensils department, there are fanciful tongs shaped like cat paws and a man-shaped chopsticks holder with hollow legs so the sticks make him look like a stilt walker. In the ceramics section, there are plates and cups resembling traditional *kokeshi* dolls. Blue and white ceramic bowls, ideal for cereal, rice, or soup, are stamped with a simple raindrop pattern, and come in sets with wooden chopsticks. There are cleverly designed mugs, too. A calico cat-shaped cup has its own little kitten spoon.

From Jewel Japan, distributed by Miya, a microwave-safe series of mugs printed with modern graphics of cats, whales, or origami cranes come with handy matching lids to keep beverages warm.

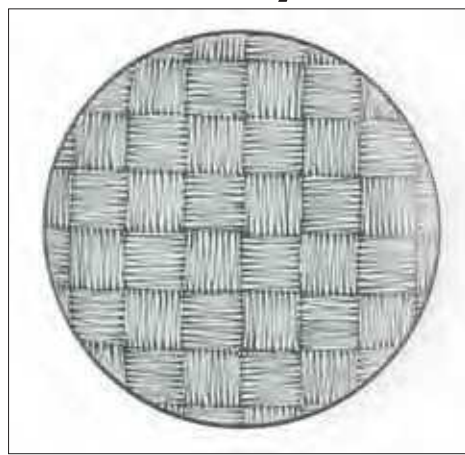
Cats are well represented in Asian tableware as symbols of good luck. Along with all the feline mugs, there are playful pussycats gamboling over glass and porcelain plates, and a clever cat-shaped matte black teapot, with the cat’s head becoming a cup.

A striking black-and-white plate collection by Komon draws inspiration from traditional Japanese patterns such as hemp leaves, snowflakes, arrow feathers, and thatching.

North Korean flag flies in South before Olympic Games opens

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the Olympics will help ease tensions between rivals and lead them toward a “peaceful and good” direction.

The Koreans have been planning several conciliatory gestures during the games Seoul sees as an opportunity to revive meaningful communication with the North after an extended period of animosity and diplomatic stalemate over its nuclear weapons and missiles program.



Run by the Lin family since 1997, Mrs. Lin’s Kitchen in Pleasanton, California, sells table and kitchen goods as well as home accessories. A collection of serveware is designed in the style of 16th-century Japanese Oribe ceramics, known for their bold designs and copper green glaze. A pattern called Sunlit Forest evokes sunlight streaming through a woodland canopy at midday.

There are jaunty lidded Chawa Muchi cups, traditionally used for egg custard. Painted with star flowers or clover, they’d make a pretty presentation for a sweet dessert.

Children’s chopstick sets include holders shaped like pandas, cats, and bunnies.

Beautiful Wakasa chopsticks are made of hand-lacquered wood that’s then inlaid with shell or pearl in a design meant to evoke the clear, rippling waters of Japan’s Wakasa Bay.

Forget those boring buffet platters; consider a detailed, miniature lacquerware boat or bridge on which to perch the savories or sweets. Red and gold trim accents these glossy black pieces that would bring a touch of drama to the table.

CB2 has a matte-black, rustic, clay stoneware dish set comprised of a cup and saucer, bowl, and two round plates with raised edges in the traditional Japanese style.

And School of the Art Institute of Chicago student Louis Kishfy designed a serene little tea mug that marries a gritty, tactile stoneware base with a silken glazed cloak in white, cobalt, or sky blue.

The Koreans have also agreed to jointly march under a “unification” flag during the opening ceremony and for a North Korean art troupe to perform in Gangneung and Seoul.

PyeongChang, a relatively small ski resort town, will host the ski, snowboard, and sliding events during the Olympics. Gangneung, a larger coastal city about an hour drive away, is hosting the skating, hockey, and curling events.

Talking Story: Better blending West and East (Portlanders)

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recently arrived from China, who volunteers priceless hours and hours reshaping refugee camp hand-signing into standard American Sign Language.

Our evening got warmer and fuller. More and more Bhutanese Portlanders arrived by bus and MAX transfers, soaked but happy after walks from dark TriMet stops. Also in rubber silapahs. Also no socks.

“Hey, why don’t your families do socks, *saudara saya* (dear brother)?” I elbowed my thrift-store couchmate — a young guy who earned his way off REI’s shipping dock onto its sales floor, serving cool Portlanders; a bright guapo who used his quickly acquired English skills and his natty northwest outdoor wear, to rocket into Oregon bio tech. Not to do assembly, mind you. He’s an upwardly mobile quality-control krotjong (non-translatable slang).

“Well you know,” he said, “we’re mountain people. Himalayas. Like, the Roof of the World. Compared to back home —” his pause took him to that place all immigrants go, conversations like this — compared to back home, this is nothing.”

And this comparison might lead into contrasting a New American’s half-full glass with a settled Portlanders’ bad weather banter. But not in this essay. Not in a ridiculously optimistic newcomer’s narrative.

Sharing better our wealth, both kinds

America’s story, our immigrant nation’s story, is more about the beautiful music of our mix. Sure there are some awful notes, with some regularity. Some of it right now. But our ugliness gets relatively rapidly reduced into the dark pages of our kids’

U.S. history textbooks — those India ink renderings of slave-ship cargo holds; that image of Andrew Jackson presiding over death marches of entire nations; those pictures of cops atop tall black horses, clubs high over their heads, immigrant Irish working men and working women in long skirts, below.

What that Bhutanese family, their Iraqi neighbors, and their Chinese teacher actually bring to our robust mix, is connectedness. Those millennia tried-and-true ways. What white lab-jacketed social scientists call “culture.”

Meaning those duties binding women and men, older and younger, host and stranger.

Meaning loyalty to place, to community — our love of river matriarchs and moody mountains; our emotional investment in our neighbors; the interdependence of all this.

And finally, meaning our awe for this grand production those science guys call the universe; our reverence for this grand mystery that our wisest translators and our wayward physicists call Great Spirit or God.

So much, Portland already owns. First world-city core and Old-World outer edges, each in their place. Substantially unshared. We now need only to properly value our two distinct kinds of wealth: The institutionally secured assets of our robust mainstream *and* the at-risk cultural capital our immigrants bring by the boatloads. Then spread both around.

April 2017, Bhakta took an oath to love America. He is now a U.S. citizen. That same spring he graduated from a City of Portland civic-leadership academy. We should all celebrate.



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