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Love It, Stash It or Leave It Behind?

WHAT TO DO WITH YOUR FAMILY'S FINE CHINA

By Kimberly Lord Stewart

THE RULES are clear. Never talk about religion or politics at family gatherings. But what about who will take Grandma's or Mom's precious heirloom china? As you pass around the Thanksgiving side dishes this coming year, take a closer look at the delicate gravy bowl and covered casserole dish of green beans. Think about the memories those dishes hold.

Will you cherish or perish at the thought of inheriting your family's china? You aren't alone if the subject makes you squirm. I've never heard from so many people about their guilt, remorse and joy about such a divisive family topic.

As our parents age and generations leave us, there are many mixed emotions that accompany the experience. Lives well lived and all the belongings that go with the people we love hold a welter of memories.

My sisters and I recently went through the heart-wrenching task of helping our mother go through her belongings when downsizing to a smaller home. As diplomats in Germany, she and my father entertained heads of state, where choosing the right place setting for a dinner party was an important part of projecting the



PHOTO: CHAD CHISHOLM



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right image. For our mom, that meant hand-painted and gilded Herend Rothschild china from Herrendorf, Hungary. For centuries, it has been known for being the fine porcelain of choice for European aristocracy, including Queen Victoria and Lady Diana of Great Britain. In my decidedly un-royal family, however, my mother watched the dollar-exchange rate carefully so she could buy a new piece of china every month or so.

As my sisters and I carefully wrapped and boxed up each piece, it brought back memories. In between cushioning each ceramic-rose-lidded top and finely crafted cup handle with squeaky bubble wrap, we recalled our childhood home filled with women dressed in flowing chiffon designer gowns and men in sharply pressed formal military uniforms with rows of official-looking medals pinned across their chest pockets. At the time, I was old enough to know that any small talk, while they sipped after-dinner coffee from gold-rimmed cups and cordials from cut crystal stemware, was a carefully planned ploy to uncover a secret or two from the guests representing the other side of the Cold War.

Fragile and elaborately painted dishes seem out of place today in a society that has shifted

TEA PARTY ANYONE?

Tea and fine china together like a good book on a rainy day. We've collected a list of where to find the perfect teapot and service for an at-home tea party.

LA CACHE. This volunteer-run store sells gently used china, crystal, sterling and other small-find antiques to benefit kids and families at Children's Hospital Colorado. childrenscolorado.org/community/support-childrens-colorado/visit-our-la-cache-consignment-shop/

HOMEFEST DÉCOR. If modern décor is more your cup of tea, this is the place. Bold black and cream-colored graphics adorn sturdy stoneware plates and mugs. homefestdecor.com

PATINA ANTIQUES & HOME. Antiquarians enjoy the hunt at this emporium of vintage objects. Find the fun and the fancy. patina-antiques-home.edan.io

OLD CROWS ANTIQUES. Shabby chic is the vibe of this Littleton shop. Stir up memories of days gone by with this treasure trove of antiques. oldcrowsantiques.com

DAVID ELLIS CHERRY CREEK. Selling or buying tea sets, china, jewelry and other treasures? This trustworthy agent of fabulous finds is the ideal place to trust for purchasing or selling heirlooms. davidellisjewelry.com

“I don’t feel very much like Pooh today,” said Pooh.
“There, there,” said Piglet. “I’ll bring you tea and
honey until you do.”

— A.A. Milne



VEGAN FLOWER-PRESSED SHORTBREADS FROM SWEET FLUERS, PHOTO: CHAD CHISHOLM

to more casual get-togethers. While writing this story, many people told me they took their family china home without argument when a parent downsized or died, but then reluctantly gave it away because the pattern didn’t fit their style, they didn’t have places to display it or they just got tired of carting it around move-after-move.

Even so, the decision was not made lightly. “I gave some of my favorite pieces to friends,” says Sarah Asmus, from Fort Collins. She inherited multiple Japanese china sets that her father bought while serving in the Korean War. “I gave a favorite tea set with a Mount Fuji pattern to a friend from Colombia,” says Asmus. She loved the pattern because it was not from her home culture. “I love that they use it all the time and serve me tea from it when I visit,” she says. “I am happy it went to people who appreciate it. It felt good to give it to a new home.”

Still others told me they could not deal with the guilt of getting rid of it. One friend said she didn’t have the courage to tell her mother that she didn’t want the family china. It’s now secretly packed away in her teenage daughter’s cedar chest waiting for the decision to be made when members of the next generation leave the nest and set up their own home.

Conversely, another woman told me she uses her family china for special occasions and buys new pieces as she finds them. She recently thought about using it all the time. Personally, I like that attitude. Why not? What are we all waiting for?

Denver cookbook author Lee Clayton Roper says she inherited her great-grandmother’s pink and white Haviland china. She is proud that it has been passed down from mother to daughter for four generations. I understand how she feels. I am grateful that my daughter-in-law recently accepted two Kaiser porcelain German tea sets that I purchased decades ago while living in Europe. She even set out the pink rose cups, saucers and pots for a Valentine’s Day tea for my four grandchildren, all under the age of 6. I love the thought of their little hands learning to pour their favorite raspberry hibiscus tea into the thin porcelain cups.

Glenn Ashton, in Longmont, loves that his teenage and college-age daughters use his grandmother Nonnie’s blue, white and silver-rimmed Glencoe Noritake china for tea parties. “It mostly sits around. Would I get rid of it? No.

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PHOTO: CHAD CHISHOLM

Is it serving an immensely important purpose? No," he says. "We're actually looking at replacing our everyday dishes; we are considering getting porcelain china to replace our worn and chipped stoneware."

Holly Arnold Kinney, owner of the Fort Restaurant in Morrison, inherited china from both her mother's and father's sides of the family. "I use them for tea, special lunches, and holiday dinners," says Arnold Kinney. Her mother's china included navy-and-gold-patterned Limoges with hand-painted fish. From her father's side, she inherited an elaborate gold-painted Heinrich & Co, from Bavaria. As with many heirlooms, it has a great story. The latter set was given to Arnold Kinney's aunt by her grandmother in 1931 as a wedding gift. "My Aunt Helen thought they were too fancy and sent them back to my grandmother, which of course insulted her. But I luckily inherited them," she says gratefully.

A treasured teacup and hand-painted cookie plate may seem like something of days gone by. But as Asmus says, "I remember using my grandmother's china on holidays as a child. It holds so many memories." Before you discount your grandmother's fancy china, think about the memories and stories they hold for you and future generations. 🦋

DENVER'S BLOOMTV NETWORK *Blossoms with Launch in August*

When Monica Michelle founded Sweet Fleurs, a vegan, edible flower bakery in Denver, little did she know it would lead to a newly launched streaming television network. At the end of July, the bakery ceased to operate, but the world will have an opportunity to learn and experience the magical beauty and healing properties of flowers with the launch of the streaming BloomTV Network in August.

Viewers will learn from experts about how to live life more abundantly and healthfully with flowers. BloomTV will include streaming videos, classes and online content on flower growing and arranging, cooking with flowers and medicinal health properties of flowers from leading experts. "The network will focus on conservation, education, entertainment and community around flowers," Michelle explains.

The concept for the BloomTV streaming service came out of the pandemic. With mandated shelter-in-place orders, the only safe place for people to be was outdoors. As a result, interest in nature and flowers literally grew. After launching Sweet Fleur bakery,

Michelle began to research the health benefits of flowers. "I found that even having cut flowers in your home were proven to lower stress and anxiety, while also connecting and grounding you. From there, I was down the rabbit hole of flowers," she says. What she could not find was a single source, a big bouquet of sorts, with information on the benefits of flowers. "I also found that there was a huge lack of entertainment or educational videos around flowers, and what was out there was very outdated. I decided to create BloomTV as a one-stop-shop for anything flower related," says Michelle.

As the founder, Michelle wants to bring the beauty of nature and flowers to the world. "I truly believe that my purpose in this life is to bring beauty to the planet. The ultimate goal is to restore Eden to her natural, most beautiful state," she says. "For me, flowers are the gateway to beauty, so by bringing more awareness to the many medicinal properties, mental-health benefits and aesthetics that flowers bring to our lives, my hope is to restore beauty in the lives of people and the planet." For more go to: bloomtvnetwork.com.