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DINING IN

There is no formal dining room in this roomy country French style home *right*. Homeowners Carole and Bud Arkenau didn't want one. Instead, they entertain family and friends in their great-room-style kitchen.



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SIMPLY MAD FOR MAJOLICA

Randi Schwartz's personal collection of English majolica china got so big that she opened up a shop in Willmette, Illinois. Today, she sells both original antiques and less costly reproductions. For more affordable collecting ideas, see "Collector's Corner," which follows.

Collector's Corner 35

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FOOD FOR THOUGHT

These two modest-size country kitchens are designed to really cook.

One belongs to a caterer, the other to a hobbyist cook.

Having trouble determining a floor plan that will work for your compact kitchen? The old standbys featured in "Recipes for Success" are guaranteed to work hard so you won't have to.

Caterer's Kitchen 36

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NOOKS & CRANNIES

Don't waste space. Turn awkward nooks into valuable storage or display areas.

For example, turn toe-kick space into a pet-feeding drawer, or add narrow display shelves to a refrigerator side panel, and more.



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Simply mad for MAJOLICA

Ablaze in beautiful colors,

majolica earthenware continues

to capture collectors' hearts from

coast to coast. Here's a look at

one woman's quest for this prized

but elusive antique pottery.



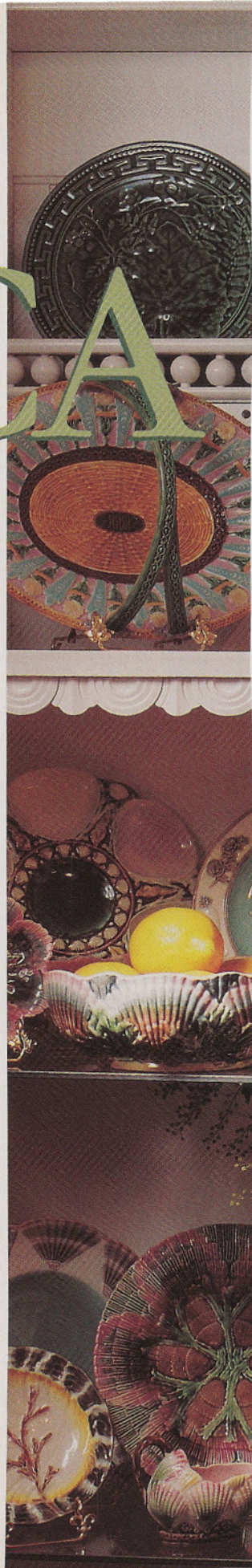
■ *Randi Schwartz appreciates majolica's free-flowing color and often-thematic tie to nature. On the top shelf of this cabinet right a little fox tops a tureen with prey decorating the base. Dishes with rounded indentations on the middle shelf are designed for serving oysters.*

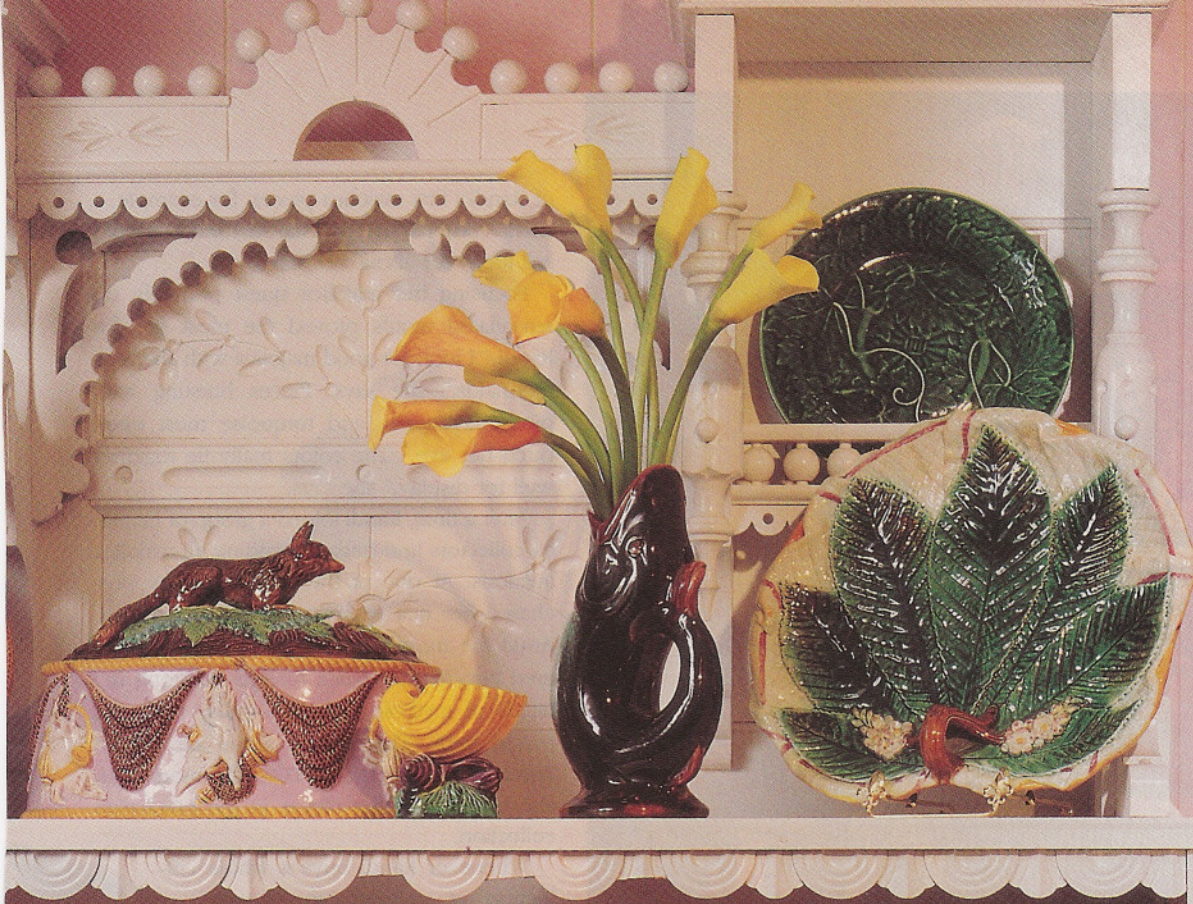
PHOTOGRAPHER: JON MILLER, HEDRICH-BLESSING
FIELD EDITORS: SALLY MAUER AND HILARY ROSE

In the late 1970s, Randi Schwartz fell in love ... twice. First with now-husband David Schwartz. Then, Randi confesses, on their honeymoon to England she discovered a second passion: antique majolica pottery. (For details about majolica, see "Majolica Lore" on page 33 and "More on Majolica" page 34.) She purchased a few pieces featuring pretty shell motifs.

As she continued exploring the English shops, Randi began to notice more of this high-relief pottery with its naturalistic designs and lavish hues. True infatuation began. "Almost right away I started collecting oyster dishes," she recalls. "I didn't choose majolica because it was collectible. No one was buying it then, but I just liked it."

Back in the States, majolica proved difficult to find. But Randi soothed her treasure-hunting urges by purchasing and enjoying antiques of all kinds. "Our house looked like an antiques shop, so we opened our first shop in 1978," says Randi.







■ For more than 15 years, Randi searched for the water-lily plate shown at the center of the top shelf above. She finally found it at an auction. The next shelf down holds one of the most requested majolica pieces—a Wedgwood maple leaf plate.

Her store, Raven and Dove Antique Shop, operates today in Wilmette, Illinois. According to Randi, the store features one of the largest majolica offerings in one location. “I’m known around the country for my majolica,” she says. “Aside from my store, there aren’t too many stores where you can choose from three hundred to four hundred pieces at one time.”

Not long after returning from England, Randi noticed others beginning to share her interest in majolica. Slowly, pieces surfaced around the country, and prices steadily increased as popularity soared. One

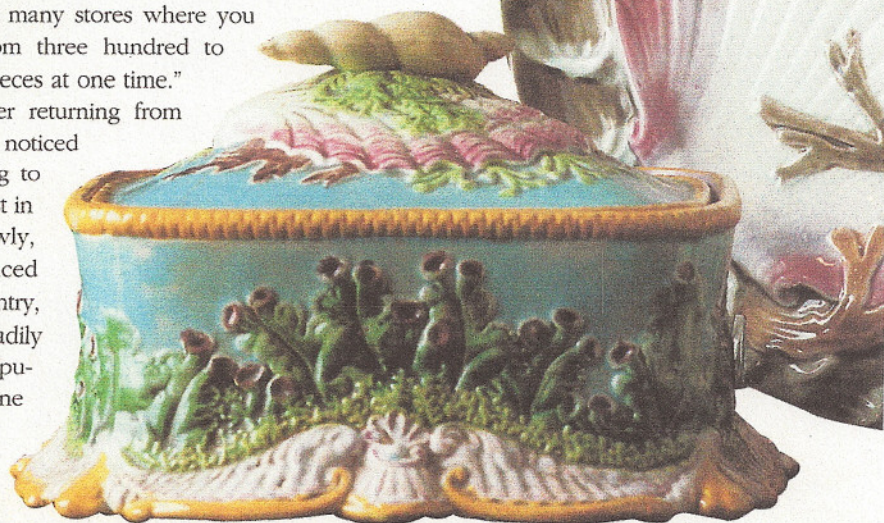
of Randi’s first majolica pieces, for example, a small corn pitcher purchased for \$1, would sell today for about \$175.

Focusing her majolica quest primarily on sea-related motifs proved the most fun for Randi. “I look for good majolica with shells or mermaids,” she says. Pieces bursting with pinks, lavenders, and turquoise most often catch her eye. “The colors really tie together well for display,” she says.

After a time, Randi joined a group of majolica collectors and began attending all-majolica auctions. At one of these auctions she purchased her first entire collection of majolica. Amid the more than 100 pieces, she discovered two Minton sauce tureens featuring the heads of mythological gods—now her most prized finds. The tureens alone are valued between \$5,000 and \$7,000—far more than she paid for all the pieces in the purchased collection.

Whenever Randi buys a whole collection at auction, she keeps favorites for herself, then sells the rest at her shop.

Today, due to intense popularity, good-quality majolica is once again scarce, and prices continue to escalate. For example, butter pats—small dishes designed to



Majolica Lore

You can credit a brilliant marketing strategy for the Minton and Co. successful new earthenware line, introduced at London's Crystal Palace Exhibition in 1851. Simply by calling the colorful pieces "majolica-like wares"—a reference to the famous majolica pottery Italy had produced during the 17th and 18th centuries—the company

gave its new product a romantic mystique. The Victorian English went wild for the stuff—even Queen Victoria placed orders for the palace—so it's little wonder that several European potteries followed suit.

Once these potteries began shipping pieces overseas, American women fell in love with majolica, too. Soon, domestic potteries attempted to compete with the imports by copying the most sought-after English designs and selling them for less.

Most 19th-century majolica featured the shapes of plants or animals. In America, the pottery was decorated almost exclusively by very young, unskilled women. Working in the factories, the young women produced several hundred pottery shapes and forms for decorative and utilitarian use. Some of the more common design motifs are corn, maple leaf,



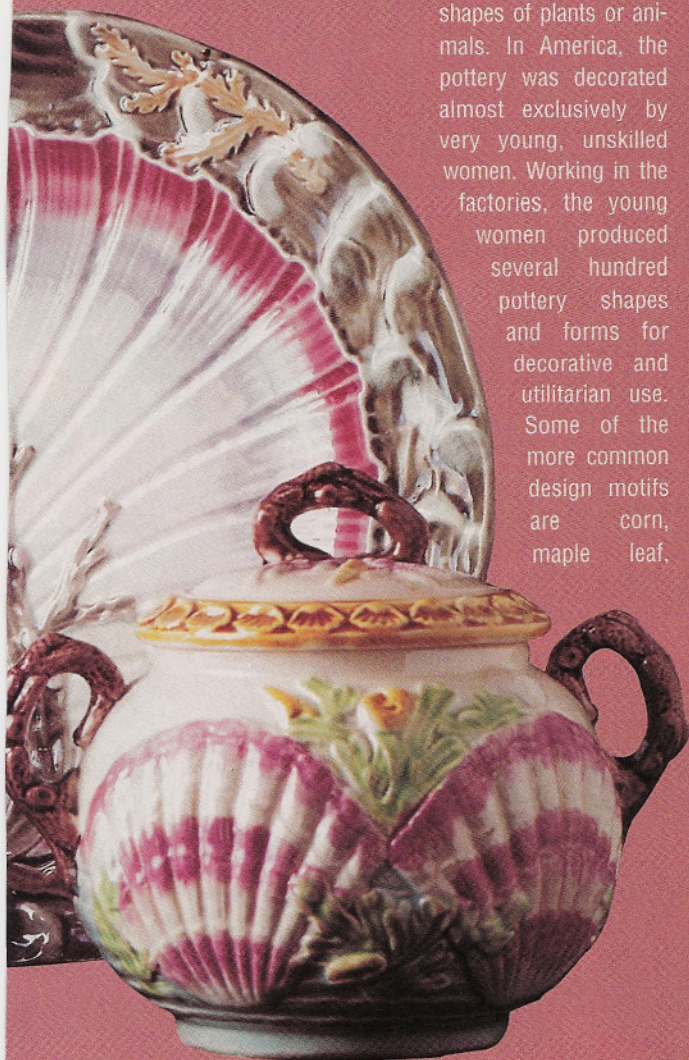
begonia, bamboo, and shell geranium, as well as dozens of animals and birds.

In the early 1900s, overproduction and a decline in majolica quality resulted in its falling from public favor. For more than 75 years, the pottery sat untouched in attics and on flea-market shelves.

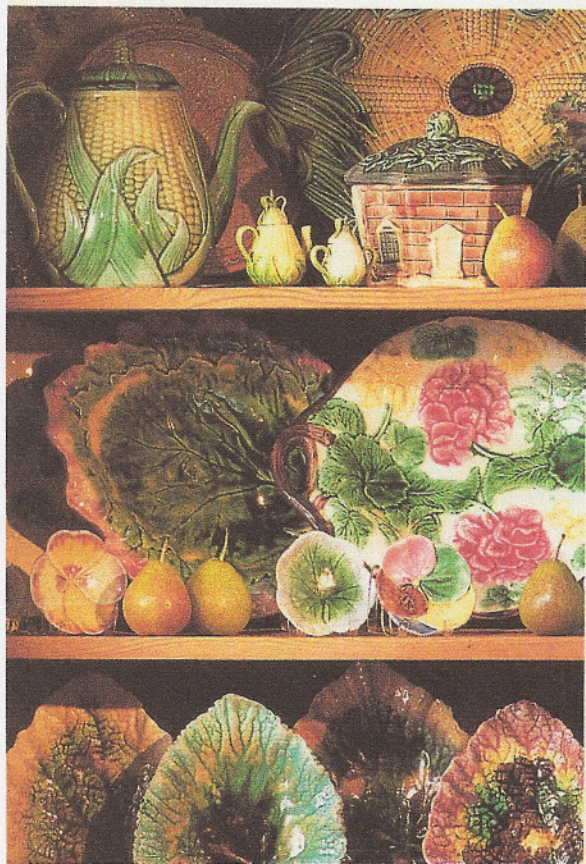
Today, of course, people are longing once again for these novel pieces with their bright colors and frivolous forms.

■ *Some collectors prefer to focus on majolica animals, such as the ones shown on the middle shelf of this cabinet above. Some of the pieces serve as pitchers, while others store smoking materials. The bottom shelf holds a collection of Etruscan majolica.*

■ *These fine examples of sea-related majolica motifs left reveal Randi's favorite collecting theme. All three pieces date from around the 1880s and range in price from \$425 for the Wedgwood shell-and-quill plate to \$550 for the Fielding shell-and-coral sugar bowl to \$1,800 for the George Jones seaweed-and-shell sardine box with lid.*



Corn-pattern items, such as the coffeepot (\$750) shown on the top shelf of the cabinet below, are particularly popular right now. On the second shelf, the large plate with the green leaf is an Etruscan oak tray—a piece that Randi highly recommends to first-time majolica collectors.



hold a single pat of butter—once sold in the \$20–\$30 range. Today, common motifs sell for about \$125 and rarer versions cost upward of \$425.

Still, Randi encourages anyone with a true interest in the pieces not to give up the search. “It’s always great to go somewhere and see something you’ve never seen before, or find a piece you’ve been hunting for a long time,” she sums up. “It’s something you can enjoy forever.” □

■ *This bowl with cherubs (\$2,800), and the shell place-card holder (\$220), as well as the trivet plate (\$375) and wild-rose pitcher (\$795)—both by George Jones—feature Randi’s preferred majolica color combinations.*

More on Majolica

As you search for majolica, Randi Schwartz offers these suggestions:

■ **Good hues.** “Each piece of majolica was painted individually.”

explains Randi. “Some are bright and rich, while others appear washed out. I look for the really intense, brighter colors.”

■ **Balanced luster.** As with colors, glazes were applied by hand. “Some are sloppily done,” says Randi. “Look for an even glaze.”

■ **Well-honed relief.** Study the sharpness of the design. “Some are not well-molded,” says Randi. “You want precise, obvious lines—called a crisp mold.”

■ **Favor the flawless.** Inspect the piece you’re considering for chips or cracks. “Try to get the most perfect you can—damaged pieces won’t appreciate,” explains Randi. She also prefers pieces that haven’t been repaired.

■ **Principal purchase.** If you’re looking for your first piece of majolica, Randi recommends two: an Etruscan oak tray—prices range from \$300 to \$500 (“You can find a lot to go with it,” she says), and begonia dishes—prices range from \$75 to \$300 (“You can have a whole wall full of these and they look great.”).

■ **Whereabouts.** To find majolica, Randi recommends frequenting large, high-quality antiques shows. Some auctions also specialize in majolica. Plus, majolica collectors often like to buy and sell among themselves.

You can learn more about majolica, including where and what to buy, through the Majolica International Society. To join, send \$30 to Suite 103, 1275 First Ave., New York, NY 10021.

■ **Read more about it.** Randi recommends the book *Majolica* by Marilyn G. Karmason with Joan Stache, Harry N. Abrams, Inc.; \$75.

■ **Dollars and sense.** You can still find decent majolica pieces

for less than \$100. For example, the begonia leaf pickle dishes, French and German majolica pieces also can be found at flea markets for as little as \$35–\$45. Or, you can spend big bucks. A friend of Randi’s recently paid \$30,000 for a rare Minton tureen—then sold the piece for just less than \$60,000.

■ **Contemporary clones.** Love the look of majolica, but not the price? Consider reproductions, which can cost from one-third to one-half of the originals. One company, Majolica Wares, produces especially fine pieces today, says Randi. To purchase Majolica Wares reproductions, contact Stamper’s in Cleveland, Tennessee, at 800/782-6737. Expect to pay from \$8 to \$350 for these reproductions.



COLLECTORS' CORNER

There are almost as many reasons to collect something as there are "some-things" to collect. Jon Brecka, executive editor of *The Antique Trader Weekly*, offers his opinion about items that will be most collectible in coming years and why. "Baby boomers want their stuff back," he chuckles. For example, he sees recent high interest in these blasts from the past:

■ **Fire King dishware.** You may have eaten off this stuff in restaurants when you were a kid. Made by Anchor Hocking from the 1930s through the 1950s, this heavy glass dishware comes in colors such as pale green and pale blue. It still can be had for a few dollars or less for each piece.

■ **Pyrex.** Surprised? From the clear, covered-glass refrigerator dishes made prior to the 1940s to the colored and patterned pieces of the '50s and '60s, Pyrex is gaining collectors' interest. Sets of four graduated bowls in yellow, green, red, or blue now sell for around \$35–\$45, but you can scour garage sales for pieces priced from \$1 to \$12.

■ **Swanky swigs.** That's the label given to the decorated glasses that once helped sell Kraft cheese products. Made from the '30s to the '50s, these patterned glasses often feature starbursts or flowers. You'll also find "kiddie cups" featuring small animals. Expect to pay about \$2–\$5 per glass.

Jean McHale, coowner of Gaines McHale Antiques in Baltimore, says her clients still love the more costly classics, such as majolica and faience chickens. "They want accessories that make a statement," she says. These are the hot sellers in her area:

■ **Blue-and-white china.** This beautiful dinnerware, such as Blue Willow, remains unwavering in the hearts of collectors. "We've sold it forever," says McHale.

■ **Pottery.** Three makers top treasure-hunters' lists: Hull, Franciscan, and McCoy. You can also toss the ubiquitous Fiestaware into this category. Prices vary around the country, but a determined collector can still find pieces under \$50.

■ **Graniteware.** This country cookware with the shiny enameled metal

Majolica isn't the only treasure-hunting hobby in town, of course. Here's a look at emerging and ever-popular collectibles.

surface—most common in speckled white on blue—continues to rank high in popularity.

Sheila Palmer, owner of The Snow Goose in LaJolla, California, says her customers love any antique or collectible that gives their home a cottage look. "They're liking lots of color, especially for small houses," she says. "They're using California pottery in bright, cheery colors, for example. Whimsy is the underlying flavor."

Randi Schwartz, owner of Raven and Dove Antique Shop in Wilmette, Illinois, agrees. "Look for really colorful things, such as from the contemporary English potteries," she says, adding that English chintzware is especially collectible now. She personally has begun collecting 1940s Mexican tourist pottery. "It's similar to Quimper or a faience," she says. The brightly colored pots feature geometric designs and flowers.

Antiques and collectibles author Terry Kovel says collectors also are looking for hammered aluminum pieces, linens, and advertising pieces of all sorts. If you're having difficulty finding an item, Kovel suggests checking out the many online computer bulletin boards for collectors. □

Buying Tips

Once you've found the item you want, use these suggestions for working well with the dealer:

■ **Be up front.** "I think it's important to be clear about what you really want and what you can afford," says Palmer. "Don't be misleading on your wish list."

McHale agrees: "I like people to come and ask for something. Be specific and honest about what you're collecting," she says. "I love to share information back and forth with collectors."

■ **Build trust.** By tracking down a reputable dealer and frequenting the business, you can create a mutually beneficial association. "Find yourself several good dealers," suggests McHale, "and build a good working relationship with them. Then they'll enjoy helping you find that special something for your collection."

■ **Price politely.** Sometimes dealers have room to come down on their price, sometimes not. "My advice would be to always try to bargain in a graceful, courteous manner," says McHale.

Randi Schwartz agrees and offers this approach: "Try saying, 'I like this very much. What can you do for me on the price?'"

