

COLLECTING MAJOLICA

Brilliantly colored, whimsically shaped, and decorated with nature, this Victorian-era earthenware is getting more than a second glance from today's savvy collectors





Victorian majolica is actually a copy of a copy of pottery made 500 years ago. The original *maiolica* was a tin-enameled earthenware with painted decoration made in Italy from the 15th to the 17th centuries. During the 16th century, French potter Bernard Palissy attempted to duplicate the colored glazes of the Italian pottery, also calling his product maiolica. Palissy molded his wares in naturalistic shapes, gaining fame for his plaques depicting fish, snakes, lizards, and snails—the inspiration for later majolicas. Popular until the early 19th century, this lively pottery suffered a 50-year lack of interest until Minton & Co. reintroduced it to the public at the London Exhibition of 1851. Majolica again became the craze in Europe and North America, and it is this later production that can be found by pottery lovers today. The pieces on these pages, from collector Claire Nicholson Weiss, show majolica's variety of form and color. Majolica looks wonderful when it's grouped together, or when paired with more neutral tableware. Ceramics expert Rufus Foshee tells us more about this colorful earthenware in this issue's "Antiques and Collectibles" column.

Left: Leaf shapes and seashell designs are common majolica motifs. These English and American plates, dishes, and platters—including (far right) an asparagus platter and a clam dish—are mostly common pieces, readily available to the beginning collector. *Above:* Jugs and vases were manufactured in many different styles. *Left to right, bottom row:* White bark jug with rose, leaf-decorated jug, fish-shaped bouquet holder, dolphin vase, fan-design jug, unusual tall pitcher, rare bird-and-pond-lily jug, rare fan jug with owl design, cherub vase, and blue bark jug with rose; (on stools) unusually decorated creamer, Etruscan shell-and-seaweed-motif creamer, and a pair of parrot-shaped pitchers with a common style.

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