



Dressing the Thanksgiving Table

Cranberry sauce not from a can. Homemade stuffing that will taste even better when it's reheated the next day. And Grandmom's pumpkin pie with a flaky crust (she isn't sharing her secret ingredient, but it might be Crisco). To be sure, Thanksgiving is all about tradition, centered around a dinner that brings families together with a menu that seldom changes from year to year. From the children's table in the kitchen to the political truce among the adults, this late-November meal is special.



Even though red is not generally associated with Thanksgiving, this pumpkin-bedecked tablecloth sets the stage for "Fiesta" tableware, shown in autumnal colors. photo: Jimmie Buccì

As it happens, though, favorite foods served on the family dinnerware are not all that make this annual feast a culinary success, much less a visual treat. Setting the stage with a vintage tablecloth is the perfect way to dish out a generous helping of nostalgic charm to those seated around the table, with no extra calories.

But here's the kicker: While there are multiple choices of surviving vintage tablecloths for nearly every taste and occasion, such is not the case when it comes to those made specifically for Thanksgiving. "There's not a lot of them out there," noted Jimmie Buccì. And as president of the Vintage Tablecloth Lovers Club (more on that later), he should know.

Speaking from his home in Medford, Massachusetts, Jimmie pointed out that this shortage stems, in part, from the fact that not many different Thanksgiving tablecloths seem to have been manufactured. It appears that, from the start, there simply was not a huge demand for a broad selection of them. Part of the problem might be the fact that, unlike Christmas, Thanksgiving is celebrated with one meal on one day only. Therefore, those



"Turkey Time," a California Hand Prints classic available in large sizes, is perfect for a vintage-inspired Thanksgiving table.

photo: Teresa Stone



This tablecloth, with its simple lines and dramatic graphics, is coveted by serious tablecloth collectors.

photo: Teresa Stone

hosting Thanksgiving dinner needed just one tablecloth. Add to that the fact that many holiday vintage tablecloths didn't survive, having been subjected to wear and tear and gravy stains, as well as coffee spills and dripped candlewax. Of course, the key to keeping a spill from becoming a stain is to treat it immediately. Needless to say, that is not practical while the family is gathered around the table.

And then there were those modern hostesses of the 1960s who opted for disposable paper tablecloths, many of which can still be found unused and in their original wrappings.



A Thanksgiving tablecloth with a hunting theme? Think of it as a conversation starter.

photo: Jimmie Buccì

But all is not lost. Over the years, Jimmie said, collectors have come to embrace fall-themed tablecloths, ones that feature cornucopias, pumpkins, and, most notably, Indian corn. Others look for tablecloths that are "the right color," autumnal tones that include orange, gold, and brown.

As for sizes, Jimmie pointed out that back in the day, most families had smaller dining rooms than those of today. In those smaller rooms were smaller tables. Consequently, most, but by no means all, vintage tablecloths are not large enough to cover today's oversized tables. Tablecloths sized for card tables might measure 32 x 32 or 36 x 36 inches. Larger tablecloths might extend to 52, 68, or 72

inches in length, with many measuring only 52 or 54 inches in width. One attractive solution is to layer a small cloth over a larger modern one. Display it at an angle. Or, as Jimmie suggested, place two identical tablecloths end to end.

Which brings us to a reproduction alert: Often made in India, newer cloths are hemmed on all four sides, whereas the width of a vintage cloth is not hemmed but has selvage ends. As for age, linen cloths, for the most part, predate those made of cotton, in part because they require more care when laundered, as well as being tricky to iron. Tablecloths made of blends are often new.

As for condition, collectors shy away from tablecloths with holes, although Jimmie said some people have come up with ways to make somewhat acceptable repairs. On the other



Collector Jimmie Buccì calls "Bountiful" one of his favorites for this time of year.

photo: Jimmie Buccì



"Thanksgiving Dinner" by Maycraft is appreciated for its simple graphics, complementing a "faux bois" overall design.

photo: Teresa Stone

hand, tablecloth lovers might take a chance on examples that are stained. There are a variety of ways to bring soiled cloths back to their original condition, including "crofting," a process that involves laying a damp cloth outside on grass to dry. At all costs, avoid using "oxy" products on pieces with metallic trim, he warned.

So here's the good news. With perseverance, and except for the most rare examples, a vintage tablecloth for your holiday table need not break the bank, with prices for solid-colored examples beginning at about \$20. A "decent" printed tablecloth might be purchased for as little as \$30 or \$40, Jimmie noted.



The pattern name of this tablecloth, made by California Hand Prints, remains unknown.

But it is an elegant choice for the Thanksgiving table. photo: Jimmie Buccì

"The World of Antique Rugs" continued from page 20

But age alone does not create importance. A rug becomes significant through the convergence of rarity, design, craftsmanship, provenance, condition and cultural context. Some rugs possess extraordinary artistic refinement; others are powerful precisely because they preserve the character of a village or tribal tradition. Some have travelled through distinguished collections, while others have remained within families for generations.

This is where provenance becomes invaluable. The history of ownership can transform an already remarkable rug into a historical document. Auction records, exhibition histories, collection labels, photographs and documented ownership can establish a chain of association that gives the object another dimension. Provenance does not replace the physical examination of a rug, but it can illuminate its journey and place it within a broader cultural narrative.

There is rarely a single feature that announces whether a rug is genuine. The most reliable assessment comes from understanding how its various elements relate to one another. Does the construction correspond with the claimed region? Are the materials consistent with the period? Do the dyes, design and ageing appear naturally connected? Has the rug been restored, re-piled, re-woven or altered?

Restoration itself is not necessarily a flaw. Antique rugs have survived precisely because generations have cared for them. What matters is understanding what is original, what has changed and how sensitively the intervention has been carried out. A well-restored rug can continue to tell its story; concealment, rather than restoration, is



what compromises that story. Ultimately, the study of an antique rug is an education in looking.

The collector learns to move beyond the obvious—to turn the rug over, examine its foundation, follow the rhythm of its knots, study the colors in changing light and observe the tiny departures from uniformity that reveal the human hand.

Because an antique rug does not simply preserve a design. It preserves evidence. Evidence of a place. Evidence of a culture. Evidence of an artisan's imagination. Evidence of commerce, migration, tradition and time and perhaps this is what makes the finest antique rugs so compelling. They do not merely decorate a room; they bring another world into it. To read one is to look beyond its beauty and discover the civilization woven beneath it.

Persian: An all-over floral design covers the field of this antique Kerman rug, hand-knotted in Iran circa 1920, measuring a truly grand 13'6" x 27'. The field is a dense tapestry of intricate blossoms and vine work, dominated by desert rose and peach hues. Its multi-layered borders further enhance this, showcasing distinct floral patterns and elegant scrolling motifs.

Yogesh Chaudhary is the Managing Director of Jaipur Rugs Ltd., India. He has played a pivotal role in expanding the brand's global presence while staying true to its heritage. Under his expert leadership, Jaipur Rugs has championed sustainability, artisan empowerment and ethical craftsmanship. For more information, visit www.jaipur rugs.com/us

