

KITCHEN & HOME

Singing THE BLUES

BLUES, MELAMINE
TOP TRENDS AT
NEW YORK
TABLETOP SHOW

By Priscilla Martel

▲ Mikasa's Aventura reactive glazing is on trend with its two-toned hues of blue and casual shapes.

From the soaring marble lobby to the modern buyers' lounge, a refreshed Forty One Madison provided an inviting backdrop for new releases at the fall edition of the New York Tabletop Show. Alessi and British home goods designer Canvas Home opened the doors to their new showrooms, and manufacturers introduced an impressive number of fresh products and line extensions.

BLUE HUES, INFORMAL SHAPES

Thinking ahead to spring and the outdoor dining season, showrooms were awash in blue — aqua, cobalt, denim, navy, peacock plus blue and white combinations. New collections and line extensions highlighted the relaxed styles of dinnerware are attractive to today's consumer.

Designers interpreted blue in every style — geometric (Ralph Lauren, Lenox), classic florals (Burleigh, Vista Alegre), homespun (Ellen DeGeneres for Royal Doulton, Paula Deen/Meyer, Molly Hatch), sea creatures (Vietri, Julia Watts), stripes (Noritake), and lace (Mikasa, Rachel Ray/Meyer). Mikasa's showroom resembled an abstract sea in shades of blue and featured fine examples of reactive glazing; Aventura is stoneware in luminous shades of aqua, and Rustic Monterey featured a bold ridge motif, slip-coated in matte blues or greens.

"Sales of blue and white are coming back," says Paul Wojcik from Mottahedeh, a company known for its luxury reproduction Blue Canton china. Big pieces are popular, he explains, because they can be used with everyday and white china. In confirmation, Ellen Thompson, Vietri's public relations representative, says the company's Me-

langrana was a hit with retailers attending the show. The limited range of ginger jars and large serving pieces are decorated with cobalt blue pomegranates on white.

Along with blue and big pieces, bowls were a popular piece at the show. "You hold a plate, but you cup a bowl," explains Michelle Nidoy, Iittala's marketing manager. Bowls are "more comforting" she notes and a powerful metaphor for the popularity of bowls and informal shapes in dinnerware today. Iittala expanded its assortment of white bowls and added a dotted gray glaze to its Teema Tiimi collection. Denby, another manufacturer associated with relaxed, functional shapes, added nesting bowls in a blue tonal glaze to Studio Craft, a line of rimless plates with a hand-thrown look that launched earlier in 2017.

LUXURY MELAMINE

Oprah's Favorite Things for the 2017 holidays includes Beatriz Ball's designer melamine trays. Heavy-weight and chip-resistant melamine hits the sweet spot for today's tableware customer: budget-friendly yet upscale. "Vietri's been wanting to do melamine for a while," says Thompson of the company's 100 percent melamine Las-stra. The melamine version of the company's signature pattern sells for about half the price of the stoneware version, she says. Fine tableware manufacturer Juliska, which debuted melamine a year ago, added tropical Lalana melamine dinnerware as well as coordinating cotton napkins to its line. Cloth accessories have been quite successful, says Elizabeth Kirst, brand communications coordinator for the company.

Melamine manufacturers are turning the tables and introducing more collections with a formal look. Q

Squared's Nancy Mosey says when she chose to "redesign melamine," she considered year-round, indoor as well as casual dining. At this show, Q Squared presented Moonbeam, dinnerware reminiscent of fine bone china with a metallic gold or black rim. Like fine china, the textured ruffle trays can be monogrammed.

MASCULINE EDGE, COOL METALLICS

Pick up any home magazine and you'll see appliances in dark metallic finishes. Major manufacturers from GE to Thermador are pulling back from stainless steel to offer dark fingerprint-resistant coatings on refrigerators, stoves and built-ins. In open kitchens, such shades let appliances make a statement or blend into the background. In tableware and cutlery, black, copper, rose gold and matte metallics are accent colors used in minimalist design, another trend this show.

Alessi presented a brass collection of 17 serving pieces by Alessandro Mendini, member of the Memphis Group of postmodern designers in the 1980s. Inspired by an Etruscan metal crafting technique

called micro granulation, the round platters with irregular ruffled edges and scalloped trays have a soft glow and geometric motif. Distinctive among the offerings from Viners Cutlery, an English heritage brand just launched in the United States, were its knife sets. Matte black or gold-coated chefs' knives are mounted on a black magnetic board. Skandia showed a similar knife set as well as gunmetal finishes on knife blades with soft grip rubber handles. The industrial look, the combination of wood and mixed metals, is on trend and characterize the cutlery and flatware from Skandia, says Rachelle Partosh, marketing director. Dramatic designs, such as chef knives in sleek sculptural shapes cast from one piece of metal, may appeal to male shoppers, a demographic often absent in the tableware department.

SAY IT WITH FLOWERS: ENGAGING THE CUSTOMER

At the show, Iittala announced a 2018 program with Alice's Table, an online community of flower arrangers. Iittala retailers will offer flower arranging classes facilitated by



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Alice's Table event executives. For \$75, participants will each make a bouquet to take home in a Kastehelmi vase. The event keeps the customer in your store for two hours, explains Michele Nidoy, Iittala marketing manager, giving retailers time for some soft selling.

Boston-based Alice's Table resembles the multi-level marketing styles of Pampered Chef or Avon. People buy in, receive supplies and online training. Alice's Table provides the flowers and handles marketing while the representatives conduct the classes and collect the fees less a percentage. Company founder Alice Rossiter says her goal is to

empower women to be entrepreneurial. For now, the focus is on flower arranging, but could expand into other crafts, she says. The two-year-old company has done events with Toms Shoes, Bloomingdales and small retailers.

As gourmet specialty retailers have long known, in-store classes and demos build customer loyalty and sales. A major feature of her company's flower arranging events, explains Rossiter, is the social media they generate. Not only do such events tap into the consumer need for creative engagement, they tap into the trend of using social media to help promote a brand and a store. **TGR**

New Products

MARINA DINNERWARE

Add whimsy to a summertime table with Marina, a collection of four aquatic-inspired plates from Vietri. Hand-painted in shades of translucent gray on white glazed terra bianca clay, each 8.75-inch plate sports a different design: a school of tiny fish, a crab, an octopus or a jelly fish. Sold singly or in sets of four, the Italian earthenware is dishwasher safe.

SRP: \$44 each, \$176 for set of 4 plates.

Vietri | vietri.com



TILT MIXING BOWL WITH THUMB GRIP

Juggling a mixing bowl and a spatula or whisk challenges even the most proficient home cook. Joseph Joseph helps solve that problem with its new Tilt Mixing Bowl. The oval bowl has a non-skid TRP rubber base. Slip your thumb through the hand grip, tip the bowl and mix with your free hand. The 4.2-quart capacity, BPA-free, polypropylene plastic bowl comes in blue or gray, shipped in packs of four.

SRP: \$15.

Joseph Joseph Inc. | josephjoseph.com



MASON CASH IN THE FOREST

Since its introduction, In the Forest mixing bowls embossed with woodland scenes have been best sellers for Mason Cash. Now, new accessory pieces decorated with enchanting owl, fox or tree motifs are available to encourage a new season of baking. A batter bowl, measuring bowl and mixing bowl nest for easy storage. Also available is a rectangular casserole and two sizes of oval ovenware. A generous utensil jug and lidded canisters in two sizes invites kitchen display. Each microwave- and dishwasher-safe piece comes in cream glazed ceramic and is shipped in packs of three, four or six pieces.



SRP: Flour Shaker, \$10; 7-inch Oval Pie Dish, \$10; Sugar, Coffee and Tea Jars with lids, \$15; 11-inch Oval Baker, \$15, 12-inch Rectangular Baker, \$20; Utensil Holder, \$20; 2.3-quart Canister Jar with lid, \$20; 9.5-inch Batter Bowl, \$25; 2.8-quart Canister Jar with lid, \$25; 4-quart Coffee or Flour Jar with lid, \$30.

Typhoon Homewares | typhoonhomewares.com

PINCH CERAMIC COLLECTION

British home goods designer, Canvas Home, presents Pinch, a fresh collection of minimalist tableware. The ceramic collection, produced in Portugal, features rimless plates plus bowls, mugs and pitchers featuring two small indentations, which gives the collection its name. United Kingdom glaze expert Linda Bloomfield consulted on the line that comes in pale shades of gray, white or pink. The dishwasher-safe dinnerware is shipped packed two or eight per box.

SRP: 3.5-inch mug, \$18.50; 10.75-inch dinner plate, \$23; 10.75-inch large salad bowl, \$50.

Canvas Home | canvashomestore.com



POTTER MELAMINE BAMBOO

Potter from Q Squared captures the look and feel of artisanal pottery in an eco-friendly blend of melamine and bamboo. The three-piece collection consists of a soup bowl, salad and dinner plate in terracotta brown or stone gray. The edges of each rimless plate and bowl appear hand-painted in a dark contrasting shade. The BPA-free dinnerware is shatter- and heat-resistant and dishwasher safe (top rack).

SRP: 8-inch salad and 6.5-inch bowl, \$12; 10.5-inch dinner plate, \$14

Q Squared | shopqsquared.com

