

GARAGE SALES

Collectible Glassware

Vintage glassware is having a moment right now. The patterns and textures we remember from grandma's house — and that grace nearly every garage sale, yard sale, thrift store and junk sale — can go for just a few dollars to a few hundred. Here's what you need to know in this market.

A HISTORY OF PYREX

The sometimes-colorful glassware made by Pyrex has been around for more than 100 years. According to the Corning Museum of Glass, Pyrex began production at the Corning Glass Works in 1909 with the development of temperature-resistant borosilicate glass made for railroad lantern globes. Bessie Littleton, the wife of Corning scientist Jesse T. Littleton, baked a cake in a sawed-off borosilicate glass battery jar, showing that cooking times were short, the baking was



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uniform and that the glassware itself was easy to clean. Thus was born Pyrex, an initial line of 12 ovenware dishes.

The company turned to home economists to drive the use of their ovenware, and use of the products soared to more than 4 million by 1919.

In 1936, Corning introduced a new line of Pyrex that could be used on the stovetop and, that same year, a merger with the MacBeth Evans Glass Co. in Charleroi, Pennsylvania, brought a set of brightly colored mixing bowls and opal glass, now a Pyrex staple.

Between 1956 and 1987, the museum says, Corning Glass Works released more than 150 different patterns of Pyrex opal wear.

PYREX PATTERNS

The Corning Museum of Glass also maintains the Pyrex

Potluck, a pattern library of Pyrex that can show you when your favorite pattern was made. One of the first patterns, unofficially known as eyes, features turquoise eye shapes with a star in the middle. It was released as a chip and dip set in 1950 and manufactured until 1959. The same pattern appears in gold on a coffee carafe and a clear, one-quart juicer.

Black Tulip, one of the first promotional items to have a printed pattern, is officially called Black Needlepoint. It came in a square space-saver dish and a cradled casserole. It's a white dish with a pattern of black tulips and starburst flowers. It was produced until 1957.

VALUE

Like any collectible, value should, first and foremost, be in the eye of the beholder. That being said, some Pyrex patterns sell more readily than others. A mixing bowl in the Turquoise Diamonds pattern, produced in the late 1950s, in good shape, sells for hundreds of dollars. A Pink Stems piece, which seems to have been a promotional item produced in 1962, will run you upwards of \$1,000, even without a lid or in poor condition. It's one of the rarest Pyrex patterns there are.

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SELLER'S TIP

Do You Have Pyrex Treasure?

Use the Corning Museum of Glass's pattern library and a search of online resale sites to determine if the piece you have is, in fact, a Pyrex treasure. Bear in mind that some prints have official names — Butterprint, for instance, and Gooseberry — and unofficial names. Individual pieces may also have names. The Cinderella bowl, for instance, refers not to a pattern but to a bowl with a handle or a spout on each side designed by John Philip Johnson.

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