

The Casual Table is Set for Everyone

by Thyra Porter



“The Gourmet Housewares Show is about showcasing the best products to the best retailers in the business.”

Susan Corwin, VP GLM, Manager, The Gourmet Housewares Show

When the Gourmet Housewares Show opens the doors of its Casual Table section this May, many tabletop companies exhibiting there view specialty retailers as the right market for trend introductions.

“If the product appeals to independents it will appeal to everyone and have sales success in every market,” said Keith Morrison, president of Signature Housewares. “We always think about the independent retailer when developing our

product lines,” Morrison says. The Casual Table will present the latest designs in informal dinnerware, serve ware, and barware at the Show which this year is being held in Orlando, Florida from May 8 -10th, 2007 at

Orlando’s Orange County Convention Center. Morrison, who says the high fashion turns on the catwalks of New York, Paris and Milan are often inspiration for the color schemes for tableware in the Signature line, notes green and pastels are in style this season.

The color range accepted in the tabletop market today has grown exponentially over the past two decades, he says. “Twenty years ago there were two colors: black and white,” Morrison notes. One of the key trends on display will be tabletop lines that have restaurant appeal, as foodies adopt more than cooking technique to their home kitchens.

“There’s a double market here. People eat at restaurants and then want to know where to buy the tableware.”

Tena Payne Potter

Payne has recently completed a tabletop project for the new restaurant Jai, which opened this winter at the Beau Rivage Resort & Casino in Biloxi, Mississippi. “There’s

a double market here,” she notes of the restaurant and consumer trade. “People eat at restaurants and then want to know where to buy the tableware.”

“Exhibitors like Tena Payne are a big reason the Gourmet Housewares Show is attractive to buyers,” says Susan Corwin, who is Vice President and Show Manager. Corwin notes that Payne was savvy enough to develop the technology needed to make her seemingly fragile dinnerware stand up to restaurant use. It is a technology that has made the Earthborn line popular with specialty stores. “Our goal is to present talent to our attendees,” says Corwin. “The Gourmet Housewares Show is about showcasing the best products to the best retailers in the business.”

Payne’s simple, but sophisticated organic style has been adopted by a number of chefs after they realized that the material, while elegant, could stand up to wear from restaurant use. Payne, who will mark her second year at the Gourmet Housewares Show this May, numbers some of the most stylish restaurants in the nation among her customers, including Sensei,



Presentation pieces from Earthborn Studios



Now & Then Collection from Signature Housewares

at the Bellagio in Las Vegas, Nevada. She has also added more than sixty retailers to the flock. Her business has grown considerably since tapping into the consumer market, and she has recently moved from a 3,000-square foot space to one that is 24,000-square feet, which she shares with several other artisans.



Serveware from Home Essentials & Beyond

Payne started her career as a potter in high school and has developed a technique that produces pottery that is both functional and beautiful. To the eye, Payne’s line often features delicate fossils that are embedded into the clay before firing, to produce naturalistic images. At the dinner table, Payne’s clay-firing technique stands up to the toughest of diners, matching a clay pot body with the right glaze so the two fit well together after firing. “They have to shrink at the same

rate or they won’t stand up to restaurant use,” Payne says. Casual entertaining though allows for many tastes, from Payne’s fossils to spare white patterns taken from crumbled textiles.

“I’ve been pleasantly surprised how the white dinnerware is moving.”

Alice Title, Sales and Marketing Manager Pillivuyt USA

Pillivuyt USA sales and marketing manager Alice Title, says white is a hot color. “I’ve been pleasantly surprised how the white dinnerware is moving.”

To make that Pillivuyt’s line special, Title says the company has turned to an earlier time. She notes that some of the hot new shapes in tableware today, have been seen before. “While square is a contemporary shape, square is also a shape found in an original Pillivuyt 19th century pattern called Quartet,” Title says.

To that end, the company has updated that classic pattern, which was first designed from a rumpled dishcloth. Despite its humble heritage, Title describes Quartet as very modern in appeal. And to make the design even more modern, the company plans to play up over-sized presentation pieces at the Gourmet Housewares Show, according to Title. “There is a bigger and bigger market for presenting food,” she says.

Joe Young, who is Home Essentials vice president of sales, agrees that presentation of food is one of the hottest tabletop trends this year, and a trend that comes directly from the restaurant industry. Some of the best-selling items for Home Essentials recently have been in the buffet ware category where the company combines casserole dishes with wrought iron racks to appeal to consumers looking to entertain in a more casual style.

Such a set up makes entertaining stylish, but approachable, he says. “Rather than host sit-down dinners you can put a dish in a rack, light a burner to keep it warm, and set the dish on the table,” said Young, noting that one could then, “Watch the game.” The point he says, is that restaurant-sized pieces also suit family life, by welcoming everyone who might show up at the door.

“The bigger pieces are selling well: big platters, and bowls with handles. These are pieces that serve your family but can serve more than family,” he says.

The Gourmet HOUSEWARES SHOW®

