

Victorian elegance makes a comeback with today's bride

The trend toward romantic elegance once popular in the Victorian era is resurfacing today as a prevalent lifestyle motif. Popular with today's bride are ruffled blouses, an interest in collectibles, a grace in entertaining styles and traditional tableware designs.

"Today's bride revives the styles of earlier periods, particularly the Victorian era, to add an individuality and richness to her table settings," explained Charles Solt, design director for Lenox China, which has made the official White House china service for First Lady Nancy Reagan.

"The young hostess has taken the trend for self-expression of the '70s a step further. While in love with the glamour, tradition, and romance of older times, she is also very much the modern woman.

"She prepares her meals with a food processor or cooks in a microwave oven, but entertains with a more formal and gracious style."

Fine china patterns that continue to be popular with today's brides range from elaborate floral sprays, etched gold bands and oriental motifs to delicate white-on-white and classic gold or platinum-banded designs.

Today's bride can select a pattern such as "Autumn," created by Lenox sixty years ago, or "Fair Isle," with delicate floral designs and an updated traditional look, from the new Lenox "Cosmopolitan Collection."

"In hand-blown crystal, brides are choosing at least three sizes—a water goblet, wine glass, and the dessert/champagne—rather than one oversized wine glass, suitable for all occasions," he states.

Tablesetting tips

Tips to the bride on creating table settings that reflect the romantic elegance of the Victorian era are offered by Mr. Solt:

1. Rediscover the old lace tablecloths that you have

stored away or purchase a single set of luxurious table linens. This will add elegance to your table.

You may also want to consider layering more than one tablecloth over your table for a soft and romantic touch.

2. Group smaller possessions, such as miniature vases, candles or figurines, to form a centerpiece or place before each individual setting.

Victorian homes were full of collectibles and memorabilia, nearly covering every surface in view.

3. Keep a wardrobe of tabletop accessories organized and easily accessible.

This collection may include several table linens, placemats, and napkins in a variety of shapes, designs, colors and fabrics; candles in many sizes; vases; baskets; and bowls.

4. Find new purposes for older articles in your home. A basket filled with flowers, or a hand-made bed coverlet used as a tablecloth, are just a few of the limitless possibilities to decorate your table.

5. Don't be afraid to make a statement with your tabletop design. Decoration of the table adds to the attractiveness and mood of your dinner party and shows your guests that you care.

The bridal registry

The Lenox designer recommends a visit to a local wedding registry to help the bride coordinate and register her fine china, crystal and silver choices.

The professional service, offered by most department, gift and jewelry stores, will record the bride's preferences in tableware as well as kitchen and other home furnishings items, without any obligation to the bride-to-be.

Registration with a wedding gift consultant enables friends and relatives buying wedding gifts to know what the bride wants and will use.

The consultant keeps up-to-date records as gifts are purchased and helps eliminate the problem of duplicate gifts.



ROMANTIC REPAST—When entertaining, the bride makes each occasion memorable by setting her buffet table with fine china and hand-blown crystal. Lenox's Autumn china, featuring colorful baskets of fruit and floral bouquets, and Blue Mist crystal, set off by soft candlelight, add an elegance and richness to the formal setting.

Every bride appreciates a practical shower gift

Setting up a new home is fun, but it can be expensive, too. To give a bride a head start, host a housewares shower.

You could theme the shower toward a particular room such as kitchen or bath, or let guests choose gifts for throughout the home. Whether you're hosting or attending a shower, these practical gift ideas are sure to please a bride-to-be:

- **For the kitchen:** A good basic cookbook will come in handy in any home. Or gadgets like a whisk, wooden spoons and a spatula/spreader can be packaged nicely in a cutlery tray for a thoughtful gift.

- **For the laundry:** A durable laundry basket filled with necessary cleaning supplies is a functional present that will help brighten wash day. Tie a big bow around the basket and include a set of hand towels for an added treat.

- **For storage:** No matter how much or little space a new bride may have, good organization always makes life easier. Space organizers, such as a clean-up caddy from Rubbermaid, can be filled with household products that will be used daily.

- **For the table:** Once newlyweds settle in, their attention turns to entertaining. Serving trays, a lovely crystal water pitcher or a matching ceramic creamer and sugar bowl make nice presents a couple will enjoy showing off.

The next time you're considering a bridal shower theme (or are invited to a shower), remember . . . a practical gift that can be used frequently will be appreciated for a long time to come. That makes the giving even more fun!



PLAN A HOUSEWARES SHOWER for the bride-to-be! Practical presents, such as household organizers from Rubbermaid, make lovely gifts that work as well as they look.

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