

mismatches made in heaven

Mix up
irresistible
tabletops with
heirlooms,
vintage finds,
and yard sale
castoffs

By freely combining different patterns and collections of china, flatware, and glassware, you create a look that is yours alone.

It's a style that works for entertaining, but it also looks great every day. Even though it sounds so easy to make a happy hodgepodge, there are actually guidelines to ensure gorgeous results.

harmonize hues

How mismatched should you go? "As long as the colors match, pieces will look good together," says Kathy Le Backes, owner of The Vintage Table Co. in Los Angeles, which creates retro table settings for special events. "Color is the number one guideline."

play with pattern

The more patterns the merrier? Not in this case. "I'll try not to put plates together or next to each other that are too busy," says Kathy. "When I stack plates, I'll intersperse a patterned plate with one that's a simpler design to break it up visually. Without doing this, your table could go from nice to gaudy really quickly!"

lavish on linens

If you don't want to make things too busy with patterns on plates, you definitely wouldn't want to have a floral tablecloth against a floral plate, right? Wrong!

"I originally thought that when the plates themselves have so much detail, prints and patterns, they would look best on a solid tablecloth," says Kathy. "So I took plates from different collections to a linen showroom and played around: I was pleasantly surprised that many of the floral tablecloths



BOLD GOLD China that shares gold accents always goes together. In both cup-and-saucer vignettes on these pages, the outermost plate's rim provides a charming contrast. Tiny flowers, fruits, bows and scrolls all harmonize sweetly.

complemented the florals in the plates and really brought out the colors!"

Stripes, polka dots, and other textile patterns can also work with busy plates. You just need to play around and make sure the colors match, advises Kathy.

mingle vintage with new

Especially with white plates, it's a great idea to mix vintage with new, says Kathy. "My new wedding china is plain white, with a ripple edge, but I mix it with vintage pieces and cool colors. Those old shapes and patterns just aren't made anymore. It's a way of tying the past and present together."

"The mismatched looks add so much more character to a dinner table," says Kathy. "When I show plates to clients, every single time somebody recognizes a pattern and says, 'Oh-my-gosh, my grandma had that,' or 'I ate off of this pattern as a child.' It makes people nostalgic. If you think about it, all these vintage items have their own stories."

3 can't miss looks



Mingle plain with ornate

1 feminine florals

Delicate florals are gorgeous on their own, but you can really amplify the palette with details like gold-rimmed chargers and gold-rimmed glassware. Many floral plates have a central bouquet, and that repeating motif creates a matched look even though each piece is different. Teacups and saucers, in particular, tend to sport flowers. For a fun effect, switch out the cups and saucers of different sets. Vintage hankies are perfect complements.



Mix clear wine glasses with tumblers

BREEZY BOUQUETS Go ahead and mix a patterned tablecloth with floral china--the two offset each other beautifully. Vintage hankies at each placesetting add more pattern and further tie together the colors of the plates and cloth. If you have matching plates, place them diagonally across a table from one another, rather than side by side. Fresh bouquets add a fitting flourish.



REPEAT AFTER ME

At first glance, this table appears to be matched. But look again and notice that each place setting is different. What ties it together is the repetition of dusty rose plates in different sizes. Each wineglass is different too, but they all go together because they are clear glass. Mix mother-of-pearl, Bakelite, and silver flatware, but never silver with stainless, which clashes.



2 harvest dinner

In fall, when Indian summer warm days still linger, it's a treat to celebrate outdoors. Pick up the colors of fall foliage with a russet tablecloth, then set a table with nostalgic pinks and burnished golds. Pair vintage wood-handled or Bakelite flatware with a mix of monogrammed silver with scrolly handles. All clear glass goes together, so freely mix wine glasses and tumblers of all different sizes and shapes.

Pair new and vintage white china



Contrast scalloped, rippled and smooth plate rims



3

white-on-white delight

It's the contrast between the raised patterns and edges that makes white-on-white tabletops so appealing. Here's a look that's really cute with different patterned napkins. It lends itself to all kinds of accessorizing, too, so bring out your collectibles and use them playfully on the tabletop. Choose any color scheme you like—it will look great with the white. For drama, we displayed our white settings on a farmhouse wood tabletop—no tablecloth necessary!

PALES BY COMPARISON Any inexpensive set of new white china gets instant charm when mixed with pale vintage plates. When you stack the pieces up, the tiniest details will show up, such as variations in hue and glaze, as well as raised patterns. Your other table accessories should have color, however, for visual variety. We contrasted aqua and teal pottery with fresh green leaves.

Editor's note:
View wonderful mismatched creations from Kathy LeBackes at thevintageable.com

Top Tablesetting Sources

Alameda Point Antiques Faire
alamedapointantiquesfaire.com
Large monthly in northern California overflows with plates aplenty.

Brooklyn Flea
brooklynflea.com
Vintage tabletop and more is all the rage at this year-round weekend show.

Springfield Extravaganza
springfieldantiqueshow.com
Vast September gathering offers many china finds.

The Vintage Bazaar
thevintagebazaar.com
Chicago-area market tempts with table treasures.

Poshchicago.com is a fun online source of china, silver and glassware.