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Around the Columns

Setting the artful table

Yukari Kashihara embarked on a life-changing cultural education when she moved from her native Osaka, Japan, to the United States in 1993. Kashihara vastly improved her English; earned two fine arts degrees at MU, becoming a potter along the way; won an international award for her work; and sold a piece to a museum. But she's still quizzical about a certain American custom: paper plates.

"I never saw my mother use them at home. Paper plates are not Japanese," says Kashihara, BFA '99, MFA '03. And neither is the cherished American mode of setting the dining table with a large matched set of ceramic plates, bowls and cups. "The Japanese custom is to use lots of small






Dishes, like the food they hold, can be both functional and beautiful. Potter Yukari Kashihara holds a pitcher at her gallery in Rocheport,

dishes,” she says. “Some Mo. hold food we share. And of course everyone has their own rice bowl.” A table setting comes together from several sets of complementary dishes, and diners sometimes favor a certain dish to hold a particular food.

In Kashihara’s Rocheport, Mo., gallery northwest of Columbia, she displays her range of creative talent, from beautiful, abstract white forms to all kinds of crockery, which is often lighthearted and playful. Beyond making an array of bowls and teapots, she has filled commissions for olive oil pitchers, egg roll serving plates and even a wide-mouthed vessel for dispensing mashed potatoes to hungry boys. For each commission, she imagines the dish and how the food will look in it, and she designs shapes and colors accordingly. “Sometimes if I’m a little hungry, I see the food first and then imagine a pot for it,” she says laughing.

“I like making functional pots, but I want to do pieces that are one of a kind, beautiful, artful. If it’s an olive oil container, I want something good for pouring oil but that’s still graceful. When a family gathers for dinner, it’s so nice to use fine pots, especially if they are unique and meaningful and add to the atmosphere. That makes the meal special.” — *Dale Smith*

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