

What do Eisenhower, Reagan and Queen Elizabeth II Have in Common?

By The Cooking Ladies

Louisville Stoneware records show that Mamie Eisenhower used the popular Bachelor Button pattern in her every day dishes.

Ronald Reagan received a small scale Louisville Stoneware replica of the White House, filled with jelly beans.

In 2007, when she visited Churchill Downs for the Kentucky Derby, Queen Elizabeth II received a Louisville Stoneware music box that played My Old Kentucky Home.

By changing with the times, by continuing the American tradition of transforming clay into enduring, functional art forms, Louisville Stoneware celebrates 200 years in 2015. For two centuries, their creative designs in stoneware have reflected the ever-changing story of the United States.

In 1815, preserving food was a necessity. Salt-glazed stoneware crocks protected precious baking supplies like sugar and flour from critters and decay.

By 1820, stoneware jugs packaged another valuable commodity, Kentucky Bourbon. Up to that time, bourbon was sold in wooden barrels. Stoneware jugs not only saved the consumer money by being re-fillable,



PHOTOS: LOUISVILLE STONWARE



Louisville Stoneware My Old Kentucky Home Music Box



Louisville Stoneware Bachelor Button pattern

they provided a marketing tool for the vendors by providing space for printed labels.

As communities grew, Louisville Stoneware met demands for bakeware and serveware with stoneware designs for plates and bowls. Flowerpots became popular, as did cookie jars, bird houses, and garden ornaments.

Over the years, numerous companies like Kentucky Fried Chicken, have commissioned Louisville Stoneware to create unique designs that reflect their industries. Dinner plates and salt and pepper shakers in the image of the Colonel are collector items.

The C21 Museum Hotel in Louisville, voted top honors five years in a row by Condé Nast Traveler’s annual Reader Choice survey, recently turned to Louisville Stoneware to create “Proof” dinnerware for their Proof on Main restaurant. Louisville Stoneware miniature red penguins were inspired by the 4-foot tall limited edition plastic penguin sculptures exhibited throughout the C21 properties.

We toured the Louisville Stoneware art factory in the Paristown Pointe district of Louisville. The company uses natural stoneware clay up to 250 million years old. Pale grey with an earthy aroma, it is as fine as icing sugar.

Under the guidance of Nancy Stephen, the Director of Communications & Tourism Development, Louisville Stoneware is playing a major role in the marketing of Louisville to the world.

“Everyone who works at Louisville Stoneware has the opportunity to have personal satisfaction on every piece,” Nancy said.

No fewer than 20 people touch each stoneware creation as it transforms from clay into functional art. The artists work visually, sensuously, intuitively, and passionately to perfect each design.

Factory tours bring the history of stoneware to life. Visitors can work hands-on to creatively complete mugs, bowls, and figurines.

The Louisville Stoneware Hot Brown Baking Dish is a popular souvenir with Louisville visitors. A Hot Brown is a hot sandwich originally created at the Brown Hotel in Louisville. Most Louisville area restaurants serve their version of the smothered-in-sauce dish. The variations on the Hot Brown are as inventive as the chefs’ imaginations.

This is our version of the Hot Brown.

Louisville Open-Faced Hot Brown

Makes 2 large servings

- 2½ tbsp (37.5ml) butter**
- 3 tbsp (45ml) all purpose flour**
- 3 cups (750ml) milk**
- ½ tsp (0.625ml) white pepper**
- 1½ cups (375ml) grated mild cheddar cheese**
- 2 large slices sourdough bread**
- 8oz (227g) thinly sliced smoked turkey**
- 6 slices crisp cooked bacon, chopped small**
- 2 medium fresh tomatoes,**

**chopped small
½ cup (125ml) shredded
Parmesan cheese**

Melt the butter in a saucepan over medium heat. Remove from the heat and stir in the flour, whisking constantly until smooth.

Continue to whisk while slowly adding the milk. Place the saucepan back over medium heat.

Whisk constantly until the sauce is thickened and the flour is cooked.

Stir in the white pepper and grated cheddar cheese. Stir until the cheese is completely melted.

If the cheese sauce needs to be thinned, add milk 2 tablespoons at a time. Toast the sourdough bread.

Divide and layer the turkey slices evenly over the slices of toast.

Spoon the cheese sauce over the sliced turkey.

Top the cheese sauce with the chopped bacon and chopped tomato.

Sprinkle the Parmesan cheese over the bacon and tomato.

The Graffiti pattern created by David Mahoney represents Louisville Stoneware’s recent infusion of new design and style. In this pattern, the artist uses free-flowing playful brush strokes in a simple green and white color scheme.

Stoneware can be put into the oven, microwave, freezer, and dishwasher.

Baking dishes stay hot after removal from the heat. Platters and wine coolers stay cool long after removal from the freezer or refrigerator.

April 10, 2014, the Louisville Stoneware Art Factory unveiled its newest dishware pattern—the Mercantile Collection, The Thinner, lightweight dinnerware and serveware are designed to complement today’s home chef and entertaining lifestyle. The bold, solid colors include cantaloupe, cornflower, iceberg, mustard, onyx, parchment, plum, stone, and tomato. Expanding on its earth-to-table tradition, Stoneware has partnered with other Kentucky craftsmen to showcase and sell their products out of the renovated retail space inside the art factory. Demonstrations in the renovated retail store will utilize a GE Monogram Experience Kitchen to allow customers to smell, touch, and even taste the results of The Mercantile Collection in action.

The new four-ounce dessert bowl is designed to bake the 1815 Mercantile Dessert Drops—a no mix, convenient way to bake individual servings directly in Stoneware in less than 30 minutes.

By adapting to consumers’ needs and appealing to their artistic appreciation, Louisville Stoneware has survived two centuries to become an important part of Americana. Stephen Smith, the present steward of Louisville Stoneware, describes Stoneware as “a national treasure.”

www.louisvillestoneware.com