Home Zone: Replacement company helps fix broken china syndrome

by Linda Pescatore

If you noticed any gaps in your china or silver service when setting your holiday table this year - or maybe you accidentally created a gap or two by dropping a dish or feeding a fork to the garbage disposal - you'll be glad to know that replacing those items is easier than ever.

NEED A MATCH? - Stop serving holiday meals with mismatched china, silver or glassware; matching services can restore incomplete sets, even if they've long been discontinued. CNS Photo courtesy of Replacements Ltd.Replacements Ltd., of Greensboro, N.C., claims to stock the world's largest selection of both old and new dinnerware - that's 11 million pieces of china, stoneware, crystal, glassware, silver, stainless and even collectibles in a 300,000-square-foot facility.

The company acquires its massive inventory from three sources, including directly from manufacturers - who will sometimes produce special runs of discontinued lines expressly for Replacements Ltd., according to public relations manager Lisa Conklin. Individuals also sell their collections to the company, sometimes just showing up at the showroom. Finally, Replacements Ltd., publishes a quarterly tome that details what the company is buying and what it is paying; a far-flung network of suppliers then scours local sales and consignment shops to find the most coveted items.

To find your missing pieces, you must know the name of the manufacturer and the pattern. The Web site offers a pageful of tips on finding that information. If all else fails, you can send a photograph, photocopy or even a sketch of the item to the company for staffers to identify.

Replacing missing items is not your only option; the company also restores damaged items. If you'd rather scrap the old set and start over, the company sells complete sets, too.

Merchandise is cleaned, securely wrapped and packed before being sent using an authorized shipper. Shipments are insured for replacement in case of damage en route, and all goods come with a 30-day no-questions-asked guarantee, according to the company.

You can peruse the extensive Web site, www.replacements.com, or call a representative at 800-737-5223 (REPLACE) from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m. Eastern Time, seven days a week. If they don't have what you're looking for, they can store your request in their computer and notify you by e-mail, fax or U.S. mail as pieces from your pattern become available. The company also offers a gift registry for weddings and other special occasions.

Keep in mind that the company is busiest in the aftermath of holiday entertaining. "The day after Thanksgiving, we got so many calls," Conklin said.

PEN-POINT ACCURACY

If you have a rusty hinge, squeaky chair or sticky scissors, regular spraying with a lubricant will keep them gliding like new. However, it can be a messy job because it's nearly impossible to target the squeaky area without some overspray or excess dripping.

NEAT AS A PEN - The more precise application afforded by WD-40's No-Mess Pen eliminates the problem of overspray and dripping when lubricating sticky hinges and joints. CNS Photo courtesy of WD-40 Co.The makers of WD-40, a popular all-in-one lubricant, cleaner and anti-corrosive solution that traditionally was sprayed from a can through an attached straw, developed a pen that delivers the same formula in a more precise way.

About the size of a highlighter, the WD-40 No-Mess Pen is also more convenient than a can to tote in a pocket or stow in a drawer- and there's no straw to keep track of. (After learning that more than 80 percent of its customers eventually lose the straw, the WD-40 Co. also introduced cans with Smart Straw packaging last year, which offer two-way application - in a stream using a permanently attached straw or in a wide-area spray with the straw folded down.)

Besides lubricating hinges and other hardware, WD-40 can be used to banish crayon and scuff marks from walls and floors. It also will remove sticky residue left from tapes and other adhesives without damaging paint (always test on inconspicuous areas first).

WD-40 is probably the only product of its kind that boasts a thriving fan club. The 96,000 members share stories and tips for the many uses of WD-40. To learn more, visit www.wd40.com.

The No-Mess Pen retails for $3 ($5 for a twinpack) at retailers nationwide.

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