

Home Zone: Not your grandfather's grandfather clock

by Linda Pescatore

The words "grandfather clock" probably bring to mind a heavy piece of furniture housing complicated gear work, an ornate face done in Roman numerals and a loud gong that wakes the neighborhood.

While that archetype has its place, many of the newer floor clocks from industry leader Howard Miller are fashioned with simplicity in mind to better blend with popular Zen-inspired styles or European themes. Chimes can be turned off during nighttime hours, if desired.

If done in wood, these trendier pieces are more likely to have dark, low-sheen or distressed finishes with names like espresso and worn black. The clock's elements are simple, streamlined and often oversized.

Carlos, for example, is a model that comes with a rich black coffee finish and a simple clock face with clear Arabic numerals. The large pendulum bob and three weight shells sport a brushed nicked finish. The look is contemporary and can blend with clean lines originating anywhere from Asia to Scandinavia.

The curving wrought-iron Vercelli is well-suited for the popular Tuscan decor and other Italian-inspired styles. While more ornamented than Carlos, Vercelli still imparts an airy feeling due to its open ironwork and light-colored cast stone dial.

Despite their fashion-forward orientation, Howard Miller clocks remain heirloom quality, with precision clock movements that come with two-year warranties. And these clocks are the ultimate in energy efficiency: they require no electricity, relying on regular winding for their power.

Carlos, with its cable-driven Westminster chime Kieninger movement, retails for \$3,250. The chimeless Vercelli, which features a less-expensive quartz movement, has a \$1,375 suggested price.

For more information or to find a retailer near you, call 800-873-0506 or visit www.howardmiller.com.

ENJOY A WARM DIP WITH FRIENDS

Serving guests chips with dip is a time-honored tradition during the holidays and football season. Heating chili con queso or spinach mixes enhances the flavor, but unless you serve them in a crock pot, they won't stay warm and will often form an unappetizing skin.

TAKE A DIP - Chili con queso or spinach dip tastes better when heated. This electric heated base of this chip and dip tray can keep dips warm while keeping chips or veggies chilled or at room temperature. CNS Photo courtesy of Select Brands. With an electric heated chip and dip tray - the newest product from Select Brands - your dips stay toasty warm while your guests mingle, and you can prepare smaller quantities and quickly heat them in the microwave.

A 22-ounce stoneware crock sits in the center of four plastic compartments that can hold chips, veggies or fruit. The crock is removable, as is its temperature-regulating 100-watt heating base. An on-off switch lets you turn off the heat when you'd rather serve salsa or other dips chilled or at room temperature.

Select Brands' heated chip and dip tray retails for \$25 and is available at mass marketers such as Target and select department stores. To order directly from the company, call 800-594-1425 or visit www.selectbrands.com.

STOW AND SHOW

Transporting and storing big wreaths brimming with trimmings without crushing their delicate pieces can be problematic.

IN THE CLEAR - A PVC-topped collapsible box from Klear Guard makes stowing and transporting unwieldy decorative wreaths easy. CNS Photo courtesy of Klear Guard. A company named Klear Guard thinks their wreath storage boxes run rings around makeshift solutions such as trash bags or cardboard cartons. The box's clear PVC top unzips on three sides to allow easy access to the 2-foot-square, 8-inch-deep compartment.

Two woven handles make for comfortable carrying. The collapsible hard sides are sturdy enough for stacking, yet fold flat when not in use. A clear label holder lets you identify the contents on the front edge.

The wreath boxes come in gray or green. They are available through the Miles Kimball catalog for \$14.99. To order or request a catalog, call 800-546-2255.

Klear Guard also sells Christmas tree storage bags, art project carrying bags and "flower saks," flat-folding PVC pouches that pop open to form 9-inch floral vases.

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