



# Red Wing Dinnerware & The Futura Line

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The information presented here has been gleaned from vintage Red Wing brochures, catalogs, price lists and internal documents as well as trade journals and magazines. In this discussion, a “pattern” is a dinnerware set in a particular shape with a unique handpainted design or color scheme. A “line” is a group of patterns that share the same shapes but have different handpainted designs or colors. Some of the introduction and exit dates presented have not been verified because of gaps in available documentation. When uncertain, an estimated date is provided. The end point of a pattern can be difficult to ascertain. In the 1940s and 1950s a discontinued pattern no longer appeared on price lists; in the 1960s patterns that were no longer in production remained on price lists as “limited stock” with only a few pieces listed. Here a pattern is considered to be discontinued when a full range of items was no longer available and orders were limited to remaining stock.

Each pattern has been assigned an Availability rating and a Collector Interest rating as described below. Availability represents an average for the pattern in question, however the scarcity of certain pieces within the pattern may differ. Collector Interest refers to the pattern in general, but there may be specific pieces in any pattern that are of greater interest to specialty collectors (teapots, pitchers, salt & peppers, etc). Please keep in mind these ratings are the authors’ observations; your experience may vary.

### Availability

- 1 – Rare
- 2 – Very scarce
- 3 – Hard to find
- 4 – Average
- 5 – Readily available

### Collector Interest

- 1 – Highly sought, demand exceeds supply
- 2 – Primarily of interest to specialty collectors
- 3 – Above average
- 4 – Average
- 5 – Below average

The Futura line included 10 patterns. Unlike previous lines, pieces were not added to or deleted from the Futura line over the course of time. Exceptions to this were the trivets made for the seven Futura patterns in production in 1958 and several non-Futura pieces decorated with Tampico artwork. Futura plates and bowls were nearly round but had a slight oval shape. Handles on the covers were elongated and had an easy-to-grasp bend; Red Wing touted them as “sure-grip”.

By the mid- to late-1950s makers of American hand-painted dinnerware faced stiff competition from Asia, primarily Japan, where labor costs were lower. Red Wing Potteries rapidly introduced new patterns in hopes of finding another big success like Bob White. Patterns that did not sell were promptly dropped and replaced by new ones. Because of this marketing strategy, several Futura patterns are not easily found today. The same holds true for some patterns in later lines as well.



Above: Tampico plates Below: (left to right) 1 qt. pitcher, 2 qt. pitcher, covered butter and top of cake stand



### Tampico Availability: 5 Interest: 3 Years: 1956-1967

Tampico was promoted as having a “South of the Border” look, able to make every meal a fiesta. The artwork featured hanging melons in pink, green and yellow, a hanging wine jug and brown leaves set against a beige fleck background. More brush strokes were required for Tampico than any other Red Wing dinnerware pattern. At some point at least one Asian company copied the Tampico design. While the shapes of the items made in Asia are not from Futura or any other Red Wing line, there is no doubt the artwork is a direct copy of Tampico.

Tampico was the best selling pattern in the Futura line and as was done for Bob White, several special pieces not available in the other patterns were made over the years. These pieces include a tumbler (drinking glass), cake stand, beverage mug (Village Green shape), 5-section nut bowl, coffee cup (Town & Country shape), and water cooler with stand. Like Bob White, two versions of the cooler stand were made (the large warmer from the Village Green line and what appeared to be a large bowl with upside down artwork). Also produced was a Village Green-shaped 10 cup pitcher with Tampico artwork; this pitcher was supposedly made as a premium for one of the savings stamp companies of the day.



Above: Tampico water cooler with stand Below: nut bowl



Right: Two sides of a Tampico tumbler



**Random Harvest Availability: 5 Interest: 5 Years: 1956-1967**

Random Harvest was the second best seller in the Futura line, and along with Tampico, the only other Futura pattern to continue in production until the company closed in 1967. The Random Harvest design had leaves in various shapes and sizes in several shades of brown and green along with small turquoise and pink flowers on a beige fleck background. The brochure stated the design was intended to depict “the colorful beauty of the harvest season”. While Random Harvest sold steadily for many years, no special pieces were made as had been done for Bob White and Tampico.



Above: Random Harvest sugar & creamer Left: Dinner plate

**Crazy Rhythm Availability: 3 Interest: 4 Years: 1956-1963 or 1964 (Place settings only 1965)**

According to the brochure, Crazy Rhythm was “a subtle abstract design traced in rich browns, dotted in mustard-gold, on a beige fleck background”. The abstract design resembled an electric circuit and had a cool, hip look. Red Wing intended Crazy Rhythm to appeal to the mod crowd as the brochure stated beige was “the basic color of Moderns” and the pattern was “in perfect accord with the varying moods of Moderns”. Despite being produced for a number of years, Crazy Rhythm is not particularly easy to find today. Left: Crazy Rhythm plate Right: gravy



**Golden Viking Availability: 3 Interest: 4 Years: 1956-1957**

The brochure described Golden Viking as an all-over leaf pattern in “stunning shades of mustard-gold with soft brown”. The repeating leaf pattern was set on a beige fleck background. The brochure also referred to Golden Viking as a “contemporary Danish design”. Golden Viking was produced for only a brief period and is quite difficult to find today. Left: Golden Viking dinner plate

**Northern Lights Availability: 3 Interest: 4 Years: 1956-1957**

The Northern Lights pattern was identical to Golden Viking except for the colors, which were described as “soft, silver gray with hazy hints of turquoise, dusted with a gray fleck overglaze”. These colors gave Northern Lights a more subdued look than Golden Viking, but it too was produced for only a brief period and is not easy to find today. Left: Northern Lights dinner plate



Above: Northern Lights (left) and Golden Viking tea pots and salt & pepper shakers

**Lupine Availability: 2 Interest: 5 Years: 1957-1958**

Lupine featured yellow Lupine flowers and gray leaves on a white background. “As inviting as a cool mountain brook on a summer day” according to the brochure, it was an odd statement since there were no mountains or brook to be found in the design. Lupine was another short-lived pattern that was quickly replaced by others. Left: Lupine dinner plate Right: Divided vegetable dish



**Colonne Availability: 2 Interest: 3 Years: 1957**

The Colonne design was described as “classic columns and demure flowers combine in tones of blue, subtle greens and accents of black” on a white background. Apparently Greek columns did not appeal to homemakers in 1957 as the pattern was quickly dropped. Today Colonne is the most difficult to find of the Futura patterns. Left: Colonne dinner plate Right: Beverage server



**Montmartre Availability: 3 Interest: 3 Years: 1957-1958**

Montmartre featured an organ grinder and his monkey in an outdoor setting with a lamp post, tree and building. The brochure referred to the “sidewalks of Parée” and described the design as “light-hearted romance captured in gay colors of melon, warm brown and bright mustard” on a white background. Montmartre did not sell as well as Red Wing may have wished, but today the design appeals to collectors who seek something a bit whimsical and out of the ordinary. Left: Montmartre dinner plate Right: Cup & saucer



**Frontenac Availability: 3 Interest: 5 Years: 1958-1959**

Abstract flourishes of light blue and beige on a white background were found on the Frontenac pattern. The effect was quiet and subdued, and failed to generate much excitement with consumers in the late 1950s or with today’s collectors. Apparently the brochure writers at Red Wing were not excited either as the Frontenac brochure included no flowery statements about the pattern, only a photo and price list. An ad in the December 1957 issue of *China, Glass and Tablewares* trade journal for new 1958 patterns listed the name of this pattern as “Polonaise”. Left: Frontenac dinner plate Right: Casserole



**Red Wing Rose Availability: 3 Interest: 5 Years: 1958-1960 (Place settings only 1961-1962)**

Larger pieces in the Red Wing Rose pattern had a large pink rose on a vine or branch, along with pink rose buds and leaves in several shades of brown. Smaller pieces had a single large rose with vine and leaves. The colors were very light, with a pastel appearance. Some plates, supposedly made early in production, had a gray rose that resembled a pencil drawing on the right side of the plate. As with Frontenac, the brochure had only a photo and price list, no description of the pattern. An ad in the December 1957 issue of *China, Glass and Tablewares* trade journal for new 1958 patterns listed the name of this pattern as “Roseaire”. Left: Red Wing Rose dinner plate Right: Tidbit with shadow leaf

