



# Red Wing Dinnerware & the True China 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

“China by Red Wing” was the name used for this line in Red Wing literature. But the company used the term “True China” in their marketing strategies and marked most flatware with a True China ink stamp; thus that is the name commonly used by collectors. A small rectangular advertising plaque that stated “True China by Red Wing” was made for merchants to place in their store window. These plaques had white letters and a white border and were made in several colors including blue, tan and beige fleck. Today they are quite uncommon and valuable.



Above: An example of the “True China” pottery advertising sign Red Wing supplied to retailers. It’s 3 ½ inches tall and 5 inches wide.

China clay was used to make the True China line, as opposed to the earthenware clay used for most Red Wing dinnerware. This difference was emphasized as the company continued to seek an edge in their struggle against the competition. As with the Futura line, True China patterns that did not perform well in the marketplace were promptly dropped and replaced, making several of the eight True China patterns quite difficult to find today.

Four of the eight True China patterns were available in 1959 and all eight patterns were available in 1961. By 1962, two of the patterns were limited to only place setting pieces; by 1966, only Lute Song remained as a full, intact pattern.

All True China pieces were available for all patterns; there were no special pieces produced for any one pattern. Unique to True China patterns, a 6-piece relish dish was introduced. This item consisted of a large flat base with short sides that held five individual relish dishes. Each piece was marked with a number, 1 through 6. The base by itself could easily be mistaken for a platter and was marked Red Wing USA 1. A complete 6-piece relish dish in any of the patterns is difficult to find and quite valuable. Another new item was the individual ashtray – a very small bulb-shaped bowl with a channel to hold a single cigarette. The bottom of the ashtray was marked with a unique, triangle-shaped ink stamp that was not used on any other piece. Brochures dated 1959 included four fewer items than brochures dated 1960 and later. The butter dish, bread tray, celery tray and individual ashtray were the four pieces not available in 1959. True China brochures included a warranty against breakage for one year.



Above: Majestic dinner plate.

### Majestic Availability: 2 Interest: 4 Years: 1959-1965 (Place settings only from 1966-1967)

All Majestic pieces were solid white in color. As described in the brochure, “The beauty of Majestic white china for your table gives a sparkle of elegance to casual, modern or traditional settings”. Apparently most Majestic was sold to churches and other civic organizations that served food to large groups of people. When Majestic is found today, it is usually in large lots that include many plates, cups & saucers, but few other pieces. All Majestic hollowware is very difficult to find.

At right: Top and bottom views of the Majestic ashtray. Note the triangle-shaped Red Wing signature on the bottom.



At right: Majestic beverage server.





**Granada**      **Availability: 2**      **Interest: 4**      **Years: 1959-1961 (Place settings only in 1962)**

In general, larger pieces of Granada displayed a hand-painted pattern with squares of floral, leafy artwork in varying shades of brown and yellow against a white background. Smaller pieces were solid rust-colored. Some pieces had rust interiors and white exteriors; others had the colors reversed. Covers for the casserole, sugar bowl and gravy boat were patterned, while the little covers for the beverage server and teapot were rust. Some controversy exists whether the solid white beverage server and teapot covers were also intended to be used with Granada, or if they are merely latter day replacements for missing rust-colored covers. The Granada brochure provides no clue since it includes only undecorated silhouette images. *Above: Granada bowl.*



**Mediterrania**      **Availability: 3**      **Interest: 4**      **Years: 1959-1961 (Place settings only in 1962)**

Mediterrania was similar to Granada in that some pieces were patterned while others were solid-colored or a mix of both. The Mediterrania pattern featured small blue and green leaves on a vine or branch, set against a white background. The solid color was a fairly dark blue. The brochure described Mediterrania as a “Lovely floral design in the blue and green tones of the sea”. As with Granada, larger covers were white with a bit of the hand-painted pattern. The teapot and beverage server covers were solid white. *At right: Mediterrania Relish.*



**Lute Song**      **Availability: 5**      **Interest: 3**      **Years: 1959-1967**

Lute Song was easily the most successful of the True China patterns. The design on larger Lute Song pieces included three different stringed instruments in shades of brown, black and turquoise against a beige fleck background. Smaller pieces had room for only one or two of the instruments. Some pieces also included Japanese letters that, when translated into English, supposedly stated “Lute Song”. Most Lute Song pieces can be found quite readily, but the beverage server and teapot are not so easy to find. *Above: Lute Song Butter.*



**Merrileaf**      **Availability: 4**      **Interest: 4**      **Years: 1960-1965 (Place settings only in 1966-1967)**

Merrileaf was the second best-selling pattern in the True China line. The pattern consisted of leaves and sheaves of grain in “subtle, smoky tones” of blue-green and brown against a white background. The colors were very light – nearly pastel in appearance. *Near right: Merrileaf Divided Vegetable Dish and Bread Tray. Far right: Beverage Server, Salt & Pepper and Teapot.*



**Vintage**      **Availability: 2**      **Interest: 4**  
**Years: 1960-1963 or 1964 (Place settings only in 1964-1965)**

Like Merrileaf, the colors in the Vintage pattern were very light. The design consisted of light purple grape clusters on the vine with leaves of light gray on a white background. The brochure described the design as “Delicate as gracefully draped lace. Subtle yet powerful in the patina of soft amethyst and old pewter.”

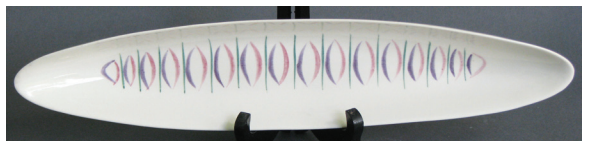


*Above: Vintage Divided Vegetable Dish and Sugar & Creamer.*



**Crocus**      **Availability: 2**      **Interest: 3**  
**Years: 1961-1963 or 1964 (Place settings only in 1964-1965)**


The Crocus pattern had a repeating oval and line design. This usually appeared along the rim or around the side. The design was a series of ovals (half reddish-pink, half purple) with a thin green line between each oval. The background color was white. Crocus was described as “Red Wing’s new modern floral approach. Designed in vivid pink and subtle purple, accented with strokes of green.” Today Crocus is tough to find and commands high prices.



*Above: Crocus Celery Dish.*



**Daisy Chain**      **Availability: 3**      **Interest: 4**  
**Years: 1961-1963 or 1964 (Place settings only in 1964-1965)**

Like Crocus, Daisy Chain had a repeating design that usually appeared along the rim or around the side of a given piece. As the name implied, the design featured a chain of daisies along with thin leaves in various colors. As described by the brochure, “A circle of beauty in a sparkling new design of gray daisies accented with leaves of rust, brown, chartreuse and dark green.” White was the background color. 

*At right: Daisy Chain Sugar, Butter, Salt Shaker and Creamer.*

