

SE Taste
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An eighth-generation descendant of the renowned Villeroy and Boch tableware dynasty talks to Emily Macdonald about the death of the five-piece dinner set Even tableware heiresses eat microwave dinners sometimes, but in the case of Isabelle von Boch, it is always served on a bone china plate.

Isabelle is only too happy to spoonfeed the knowledge her family has collected over three centuries of running Villeroy and Boch.

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"It doesn't matter if I'm eating alone, I always put candles on the table and eat off a beautiful plate every night," Isabelle says.

"Doesn't matter if it's macaroni and cheese, or if you've made a beautiful Italian risotto, we eat with our eyes so presentation is important.

"I read in a study once if you eat on the run, in the car or over the sink, your body can't absorb the nutrients." The 63-year-old may be able to rattle off every pattern the company has ever produced, but the reins weren't something she expected handed to her on a platter.

For much of her life she lived away from her German home in sunny California where she worked as a geminologist.

"Then they came to me and said they needed a spokesman and I realised I have it in my veins," she says.

"I can talk about a dinnerware pattern for half an hour, I'm that passionate. "What we're doing is taking the bone china out of the closet and bringing it into the world.

"It's dishwasher safe, you can even put a car on four plates of bone china and they are so flexible they won't break. There's no reason we can't use beautiful things every day." Isabelle says this season's trends are bright colours and strong floral motifs. "The colours are so fresh and dynamic. I call it the prozac – it makes me so happy," she says.

"I choose different cups and plates according to my mood and they really change the way I feel.

"The five-piece dinner set is obsolete. We sell our pieces individually, so you buy as many plates and rice bowls and mugs as you need.

"If I like a new pattern, I might buy, say, just the bowls because then I can use them at breakfast, or I can use them at dessert.

"No one needs 25 cups and saucers, so why would you buy them?" Although Villeroy and Boch is always releasing new patterns, Isabelle insists good tableware never goes out of style.

"You buy what you like because you like it. I've been wearing the same scarf for 25 years because I love it," she says.

"It's an emotional decision, you should let the pattern speak to you. "Our oldest pattern is 240 years old and people still love it. "I'm not going to buy new tableware every time I invite my friends over, so instead I will change the colour scheme of my table.

"The linen, the accessories like the flowers and the candles are the clothes for your table.

"By changing them and keeping them fresh, that is how you achieve timelessness." Australia is a favourite holiday and business destination of Isabelle's because of the country's strong dining traditions. "In Australia people are so hungry for knowledge because they have been raised with a table culture, they have been raised with sitting down for dinner and lunch together," she says. "They are busy people, but we all still take time to sit down and eat."

CO vilboc : Villeroy & Boch Aktiengesellschaft

IN i2411 : Pottery/Ceramics/Porcelain | icnp : Consumer Goods | idurhg : Durable Household Products |
ihouse : Houseware

NS gcat : Political/General News

RE austr : Australia | apacz : Asia Pacific | ausnz : Australia/Oceania

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