

The Noble Table Linen



Using fine table linens makes a certain statement that is unspoken, but clear in its meaning that their owner appreciates the beauty, luxury, high quality, and practicality of using only the best linens to share a meal with friends and family. People build collections of linens, since the look of a table reflects the taste and personality of the host and hostess. Nancy Iliff, owner of Linens Limited in Lexington, says, "Fine table linens are always in style; they are timeless. In spite of their high cost, they are heirlooms."

Several years ago, Sharyn Blond, of Sharyn Blond Limited in Kansas, purchased the tabletop store that had belonged to internationally known designer Constance Leiter in Kansas City. Blond still uses some of Leiter's designs, including her popular monkey pattern. "The linen business is my passion," says Blond. She believes that buyers purchase her high-end linens because she uses the finest Belgian linen for the designs she creates, which are then hand-embroidered by women working on the island of Madeira near Portugal, before coming to the United States to be sold only in a select group of stores and interior design firms. With linens in 30 colors and thread in 700 colors, customers can even choose Sharyn Blond table linens to match their china.

Jane Scott Hodges of Leontine Linens says, "People are willing to pay for high-end linens because they last a lifetime, creating an heirloom that is

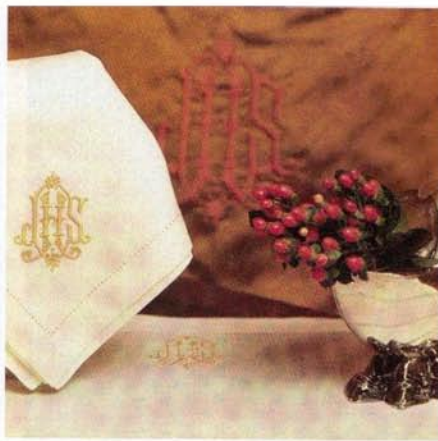
dear and special because of who they belonged to. Linens are an investment." When Hodges was getting married, she found it was difficult to locate the fine linens she wanted, so she created Leontine Linens in New Orleans in 1996 to fill the need. Three years ago, she purchased the Eleanor Beard Studios, which she calls "a wonderful line." Leontine Linens are created by hand in Hardinsburg, Kentucky, and no digital images are used. The linens are known for their exquisite hand-tailored monograms. Hodges says customers "get the experience of getting exactly the type of linens that they want and they are made in America." Each item is made to order. The Leontine slogan is "Heritage Driven, Heirloom Destined."

Rolla Gladstein, owner of Daisy Hill in Louisville, says, "Some people want the best and linens are the easiest way to spruce up a table." Gladstein designs everything for her Daisy Hill linens, which are only sold in stores such as Saks', Bergdorf Goodman, Barney's, and in Kentucky, L.V. Harkness and Linens Limited, both in Lexing-

ton. She explains that customers want a high-quality material that won't shrink. Younger people are buying linens in bright colors and using monograms, instead of the traditional neutral colors and designs. Daisy Hill linens, which come in a multitude of designs and colors, some with picot trim, saddle-stitching, and rat-tail trims, are made by specially trained people in New York and West Virginia, using machines that date back to the 1920s. Daisy Hill linens make a fashion statement that is appealing to many customers.

Fine linens can be washed in a machine using the delicate cycle, but except for Leontine linens, they cannot be machine dried or dry cleaned. Leontine linens are dryer-safe. Most linens must be air dried and then ironed to preserve their beautiful appearance for generations. These couture linens are also practical since not only are they easy to care for, they look brand new after repeated usage and laundering. **K**

Above: Co-author Sue Ann Truitt chats with the ladies of a linen embroidery "factory" in a country home in Madeira.



Left: Hand embroidered table linen from Sharon Blond Limited, imported from Madeira. (913-362-4420).

Above: Ivory hemstitched linen napkin and placemat with embroidered Etienne monogram in golden thread. Available from Leontine Linens. (800-876-4799) www.leontinelinens.com. Below: An assortment of linens, some with picot trim, from Daisy Hill.

They are designed in Louisville, and are available locally at L.V. Harkness and Linens Limited, both of Lexington.

