

Arita Ware in Daily Life

Arita ware was originally produced to be used as tableware for traditional Japanese cuisine. Typically, each part of a Japanese meal—rice, soup, main, and sides—is served in a separate dish. The shape and size of each dish is chosen to best complement the food. Arita craftsmen tended to produce smaller pieces for the Japanese market, such as rice bowls, *namasu-zara* (for side dishes), and *teshio-zara* (for pickled vegetables or condiments).

During the early part of the Edo period (1603–1867), it became popular to serve banquet dishes on large platters, and Arita craftsmen created extravagant *o-zara* dishes. After the shogunate enacted laws that restricted the sale of large dishes, *o-zara* fell out of fashion until the late Edo period.

The Dutch East India Company's trade agreement to export Arita ware officially ended in 1757, and subsequently Arita ware was sold almost exclusively within Japan. As people's spending power increased in the late Edo period, Arita artisans created new designs and styles to meet the food and fashion trends of the growing middle class of merchants and artisans.

The pieces from the Mr. and Mrs. Shibata Collection in Exhibit Room 2 are arranged to illustrate each stage in the development of Arita ware, beginning with early pieces from the seventeenth century and ending with items crafted at the end of the nineteenth century. Examples of Edo-period place settings are also reproduced using pieces from the collection.