



Ply Chair
How the Eames bent-wood process served in WWII **D6**

OFF DUTY

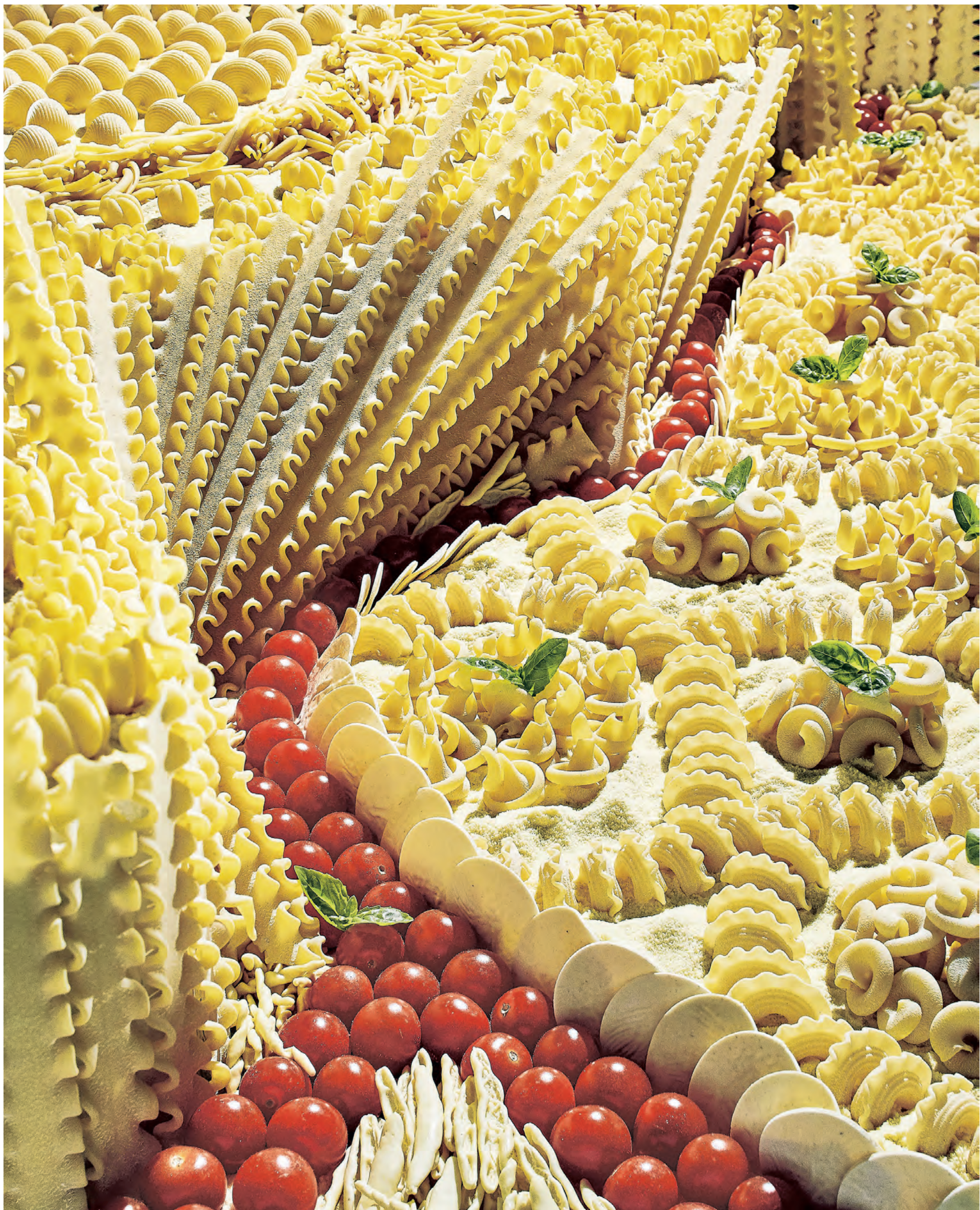
Pick-Up Line
Dan Neil drives the new trucks Jeep Wrangler fans have been waiting for **D10**



FASHION | FOOD | DESIGN | TRAVEL | GEAR

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F. MARTIN RAININ/THE WALL STREET JOURNAL. FOOD STYLING BY BRETT KURZWEIL

By ELIZABETH G. DUNN

NINE YEARS AGO, Los Angeles chef Evan Funke was eating lunch in a medieval village in Umbria when he peered inside the restaurant's kitchen to see an elderly woman tossing fragments of leftover bread dough into boiling water. She called the pasta *strappatelle* (from *strappare*, "to tear"). The pillowy dumplings were served in a simple tomato sauce for a staff meal. "When I went back five years later, the woman had died, without recording it in any way," Mr. Funke recalled. "So, I became the custodian of this shape."

Today, Mr. Funke serves strappatelle as an off-menu delicacy at Felix Trattoria in Venice Beach, Calif. Since studying the art of handmade pasta a decade ago in Bologna, Mr. Funke has made regular trips back to Italy, talking his way into kitchens to collect and catalogue shapes before they disappear. In addition to familiar shapes like tagliatelle

The New Pasta Landscape

Venture beyond the same old spaghetti. Straight out of Italy, pastas previously unknown to American diners offer a taste of authentic regional cooking. Plus: A glossary of shapes trending now

and rigatoni, Felix's *sfoglini*, or pasta makers, craft uncommon ones, too, such as *strangolapreti*, a hand-twisted pasta from Trentino Alto Adige, and *lorighittas*, a braided ring from Sardinia.

Italy is home to hundreds of distinct pasta shapes, often specific to a region or even a single town. Only a few have traditionally dominated the pasta landscape stateside, but now American chefs are branching out, presenting a novel profusion of frills, twists and curves on restaurant menus.

Like Mr. Funke, Fabio Trabocchi, an Italian-born chef with a number of restaurants in Washington, D.C., felt compelled to do his part in preserving tradition. In 2016, he sought out one of Italy's best living hand-rolled pasta makers, Simonetta Capotondo, to train his team at Sfoglina Pasta House, where all pasta is made by hand. The bustling trattoria showcases esoterica like *scarpinocc*, a filled pasta from Lombardia modeled after wooden clogs, and *cresc' tajat*, a diamond-shape pasta from

Please turn to page D9

Inside



THE COTTON CLUB

For spring, consider a casual-yet-chic canvas purse trimmed in leather. **D2**



HELLO, BALI!

To experience the authentic island, follow the locals to their favorite places **D4**



FILLET UP

This quick-cooking cut of black bass makes an elegant meal in minutes. **D10**



ADVANCED PLACEMENT

Pro art hangers share tips on nailing a home installation **D7**

DESIGN & DECORATING

Haute Style From Humble Furniture

Designers no longer dismiss vintage wood pieces without pedigree as ‘brown furniture.’ Instead, they elevate them as crucial elements of décor

By KATHRYN O’SHEA-EVANS

THE FURNITURE at San Francisco designer Justin Colombik’s grandparents’ house in Highland Park, Ill., was what you might see at a funeral home, he said: a faux-Chippendale dining table here, a pair of Hollywood Regency-style coffee tables there. Still, when his grandparents moved to Florida, Mr. Colombik showed up with a U-Haul and filled it with furniture.

In an age when new home goods can have the lifespan of a meme, designers like Puccini Group’s Mr. Colombik are newly appreciating “brown furniture.” The term refers to modest antique and vintage wooden pieces with traditional silhouettes, which have been out of vogue for decades. But now pros and laypeople are not

‘The right antique or vintage piece of furniture can make your space unlike anyone else’s.’

only holding on to hand-me-downs, they’re buying other people’s. Online marketplace 1stdibs reports that between 2017 and 2018, sales of early 20th-century reproductions of 19th-century furniture styles increased 40%.

Part of the appeal: These “low-born” pieces are well-made and inexpensive. That 1stdibs jump included only furniture costing less than \$2,000. At press time, Chairish listed 232 traditional wood preowned dining tables for under \$1,000, including an English Oak Drop Leaf Table With Barley Twist Legs, circa 1920, marked down to \$299.

“Shockingly we’ve found great deals at Sotheby’s and Christie’s,” said Hoboken, N.J., designer Jenny Madden. “Often they’re auctioning off a whole estate, and you can get good deals on pieces that don’t

have the same history as others.”

Pros and homeowners value the soulfulness these patinated pieces bring. Los Angeles designer Windsor Smith noted that millennials, rather than opting for cookie-cutter newness, want to own something that has stood the test of time. Visually, brown furniture lends heft, said Houston designer Paloma Contreras, “much like a rug grounds a room.”

Older furniture gives ballast in part because it is literally more solid. The slower growing trees of yesteryear yielded denser wood, explained Karen Keane, CEO of Boston’s Skinner Auctioneers and Appraisers. “If you pick up an 18th-century side chair, it’s pretty darn heavy,” she said. “Then as you go through the 19th century and 20th centuries it becomes lighter.”

But how to incorporate seasoned furnishings without dating your décor? One trick, said designers: marry potentially dowdy furniture with contemporary pieces. “I paired a fairly ornate 18th-century American secretary I inherited with a Frank Gehry cardboard chair, and it works,” said New York designer Mark Cunningham.” Ms. Smith recommends placing overscale art above it. Whatever you do, don’t fust up a mature piece with lots of dated knickknacks and lamps.

Brown pieces need room to breathe, said the experts. For clients in Hillsborough, Calif., designer Heather Hilliard elevated a reproduction mahogany English server, probably made in the early 1900s, by first topping it with Torrone marble. She hung a monochrome blue abstract painting over it, then gave it pride of place against a white wall. “The crisp white paint is a sharp contrast to the wood case piece,” said Ms. Hilliard. “The space around it makes it seem more curated and special.”

Context is key, concurred Charleston, S.C., designer Tammy Connor, who included a folksy 19th-century corner bobbin chair in a Southampton, N.Y., show house recently. She also hung the room’s green-and-blue striped wallpaper both horizontally and vertically, painted the ceiling a



URBANE RENEWAL Clockwise from top: In a room by Tammy Connor, a vintage spool chair adds soul; Heather Hilliard distinguished a midrange piece with prime placement; Phillip Thomas’s pink paint makes a statement of Victorian spindle-back chairs



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: JOHN BESSLER AND JOHNNY VALIANT; MICHELE LEE WILLSON; MICHAEL WONDY

pale apple green and placed the woven rug on the diagonal. “Adding whimsy to the other elements results in unexpected spaces,” she said, “and the right antique or vintage piece of ‘brown furniture,’ which has almost become a derogatory term, can make your space unlike anyone else’s.”

Contemporary upholstery brings even complete dining sets—long rejected in favor of loosely related tables, chairs, benches, settees—into 2019, said Ms. Madden. Similarly, Chicago designer Tom Stringer flanked a young couple’s fireplace

with a pair of early 20th-century Louis XIV reproduction chairs in pale fruitwood but not before recovering them in sapphire-blue silk. “Mixing materials, periods, colors and finishes lightens the room and the mood,” Mr. Stringer said.

Eche Martinez, who softened his cavernous San Francisco design office with vintage wood furniture, recommends sticking to time-tested neoclassical and Regency styles (“On the record: No cherubs for me”). But other designers embrace embellishments. For a house in Bellport, N.Y., Phillip Thomas

painted a matching set of Victorian spindle-back dining chairs a rich pink. “You see a lot of bent and pressed wood in midrange furniture,” he said, “and when you change the color it enhances that beautiful detail.”

Mr. Colombik went for a radical transformation when he painted his ancestral coffee table. He colored the columned base acid-green then added a black-marble top. “That piece was meant to pose next to the davenport, itself sheathed in protective plastic,” said Mr. Colombik. “Now it feels gleefully iconoclastic.”



Raise the Bar With a Dapper Soap Dish

Why the eco-conscious are returning to hard-milled cakes, and looking for stylish little trays to set them in

NOT VERY LONG AGO, many of us gave up solid soap for the liquid version, happy to bid adieu to the gelatinous mess that inevitably accrued underneath a bar of soap and to the anxiety (fallacious, it turns out) that it could

pass along germs.

Recently, however, some consumers horrified by the trillions of tons of plastic making its way to the oceans are feeling obliged to return to paper-wrapped milled soap, not least

because it’s an excuse to buy a handsome holder for it.

“I’ve always hated pump soaps,” said Todd Nickey, interior designer and co-owner of home goods store Nickey Kehoe in Los Angeles. “Bar soap in a dish adds

a layer of decoration and personality to a powder room.” The kitchen sink, too, can be made less utilitarian with a cake of soap in a thoughtfully selected tray. Gwen Whiting, who co-founded The Laundress, a producer of home-cleaning products that includes a Kitchen Soap Bar for hands and wooden utensils, elevates bricks of soap with silver and porcelain pieces that once held different jobs. “I think it’s nice to use a saucer or small dish from a special hotel or restaurant—not stolen, of course,” said Ms. Whiting, who also looks for simple white chemistry ceramics and small silver hotel trays in vintage shops.

Kate Smith, who produces Swedish Dream skin care in Cranston, R.I., employs simple dishes from Crate & Barrel and Anthropologie to cradle the many soaps she and her business partners test. To battle the pools of goo they form, she stands flat-edged bars on their side. “It’s a trick I learned while sourcing soaps in Genoa, Italy, in the 1990s,” she said. “It will dry much faster this way.”

As for the germaphobes: A study underwritten by Dial actually inoculated bars of soap with E. coli, and the germs were not transmitted to subjects who washed their hands with them. As “Friends” character Chandler Bing announced in a 1996 episode, “Soap is soap. It’s self cleaning!”

While there’s no way around the wiping down your beautiful soap dish will regularly require, your guests will thank you. “It might require a little more maintenance,” said Mr. Nickey, “but often pretty things do.”

—Rebecca Malinsky

Eames LCW, \$1,009, herman-miller.com



BACKSTORY

A Stint As a Splint

The wartime history of a classic modernist chair

In the early 1940s, before American furniture designers Charles and Ray Eames made plywood posh, the couple invented a valuable contribution to the war effort. They applied their nascent plywood-molding technology to improving upon the military’s cumbersome metal leg splints, which exacerbated battlefield wounds. Of the medical invention, Victoria and Albert Museum curator Catherine Ince observed, “They weigh almost nothing.” An estimated 150,000 of the splints were produced by war’s end, when the Eameses returned to developing chairs like the LCW (Lounge Chair Lounger). Eames Leg Splint, \$1,800, 1stdibs.com



CAKE PLATES Clockwise from top-left: Horn Soap Dish, \$15, cb2.com; Kitchen Soap Bar, \$8, thelaundress.com; Terrazzo Bath Soap Dish, \$28, anthropologie.com; Swedish Dream Sea Aster Soap, \$8, kalastyle.com; Gold Plate Soap Dish, \$90, smnovella.com; Nomad Soap Dish, \$17, kassatex.com; Swedish Dream Sea Aster Soap, \$8, kalastyle.com; Rebekah Miles Small Nopal Soap Dish, \$110, Nickey Kehoe, 323-954-9300