

# 1951 CABOCHON CREAM AND SUGAR

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It took me a while. The older Heisey patterns were the first ones that caught my eye. A nice, sturdy colonial piece, that was for me. One day I brought home a footed honey dish (although I'm sure at the time I didn't know that's what Heisey called it) in a sleek, modern pattern. I knew the pattern, but hadn't previously succumbed. I presented my find almost apologetically, but Bob enthused over it, and with some fanfare 1951 Cabochon became a new favorite of ours.

This pattern was hyped in the magazines when A. H. Heisey & Co. introduced it. They must have sensed they had a winner in this one. Cabochon was said to combine the two basic geometric forms of the circle and the square. Most pieces had a squarish base, not truly square, but with rounded corners and gently curved sides. The smooth, graceful shapes almost make one think of the slightly later designs by Eva Zeisel. In this case, however, Horace King was the designer. Clearly, sleek simplicity was in the air. (Although Horace drew his inspiration from, of all things, a 1404 Old Sandwich plate.) The designs he created would have looked at home on any piece of Danish Modern furniture. (No, I'm not re-decorating for the sake of my table service.) It was said that the pattern was named after a cabochon ring worn by the flamboyant Clarence Heisey, the last president of the company. Certainly, a ring with a cabochon stone did appear in some advertising. Perhaps someone was trying to butter up the boss?

The pattern number was a break from the usual. By the 1950's, new patterns were generally numbered in the 1600's. After the privations of WWII, everyone, not just Heisey, was eager to shake off the past and celebrate the future. Words such as "smart" and "modern" showed up in ad campaigns for every product

imaginable. To emphasize how modern Cabochon was (and by association, the company, too) they chose for a pattern number the year in which 1951 Cabochon was first widely promoted.

Production actually began in 1950 and continued right up to the closing of the factory and beyond, if you count Imperial's production, too. If you have a reprint of Catalog and Price List No. 31, September, 1950, you can see the introductory listing there. The company quickly decided to expand the line. I have a copy of the original catalog with, stapled in, a typed price list and a card with a new set of illustrations. Nearly twice the number of pieces are shown and priced in this addition. A different list, with even another piece or two added and yet a third set of illustrations, shows up in Catalog and Price List No. 32. The full line continued to be listed in the company's final catalog, No. 33.

When Imperial took over the molds, not all pieces of Cabochon were made, but the cream and sugar were, both with and without the cover. The last Imperial pieces were listed in 1971. The Imperial creams and sugars, at least some if not all of them, are marked with the Diamond H. (I suspect they were always marked, since a cutting they used in 1971 appears on marked pieces.) If they are undecorated, it may not be easy to tell who made a particular cream or sugar. Heisey ones are usually better finished, smooth surface with little or no rippling and mold seams not very apparent. Imperial pieces tend to show mold seams more prominently, and may have more rippling in the glass (sometimes called doe-skin). Neither of those are absolutely reliable indicators, though. Imperial could produce excellent pieces, and sometimes Heisey was a little sloppy. Ultraviolet is probably more reliable. Imperial pieces generally do not react under ultraviolet, or if they do, the reaction - a greenish-yellow glow - is much weaker than in Heisey pieces. Even this test should probably be used only carefully and with circumspection.



The cream and sugar formed part of 1951 Cabochon from the very start (fig. 1). As with most later sugars, they were smaller than ones made in the 1920s and earlier. They were made in only one size. Not much of a challenge, is it? Since both pieces have handles, they have yet one more feature to show off the sleekness of the pattern. The handles are distinctly shaped. They are more fluid in keeping with the general appearance of the pattern. The handles lack a flattened area at the top for a thumb rest and take their corners as smooth curves, never sharp angles. Yet, at the same time the handles manage to be more generally squarish in outline than in other patterns. In this somewhat surprising way (I'm easily surprised), Cabochon again merges the square and the circle. Since the handles are pressed, not applied, they are not subject to the whimsy or skill of individual workers and always come out looking the same, maintaining the integrity of the design and the artistic sensibility of Mr. King.



From the very beginning, the sugar was offered both with and without cover. This reflected the trend toward informality and breeziness. (There's another favorite copywriter's word from the 50's. Many products were made for a

breezy lifestyle. It must have been like living in a wind tunnel.) Catalog drawings emphasize the handle on the cover as though it has the side ornaments we see, for instance, in the cabochon-style Heisey signs (fig. 2). In practice, however, the cover handle (or knob, if we want to get fancy about it) seldom showed much detail (fig. 3). Covers are quite a bit less common than sugars themselves, even accounting for the inevitable lost and broken ones. This suggests that the company correctly guessed that many buyers felt at ease dispensing with lids. Not only that, but the cover handle is so small that it is often hard to hang on to. I wouldn't be surprised if this didn't contribute to the relative scarcity of the sugar covers today. Since the cover was considered optional then, you may also think of it as optional when you decide whether your set is complete or not.

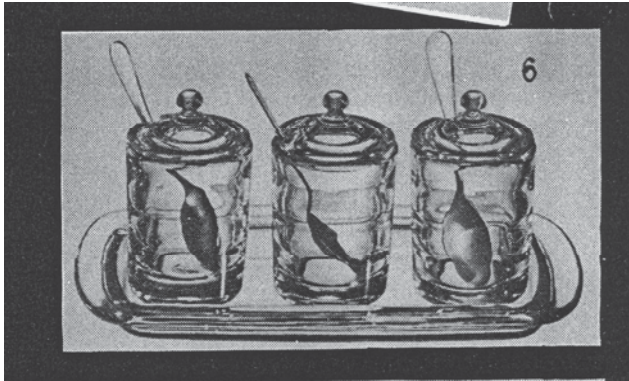


When the sugar is without a cover, the cream appears larger than the sugar, mostly because of the hand-tooled spout. Adding the cover to the sugar puts it on more even terms with the cream.

Both cream and sugar sit on the signature rounded-square feet. The bottoms are never ground, and there is never a star impressed on the bottom. You will usually find them marked on the bottom.

There is a 9" tray for the cream and sugar. This was one of the pieces added to the pattern later, first being mentioned, but not illustrated, in the 1953 Catalog No. 32. (It wasn't even in that additional typewritten list I mentioned earlier.) Obviously, the tray was an afterthought and not considered essential by Heisey. Apparently, the

buying public agreed, since the tray now shows up only occasionally. There are two catalog illustration for the tray. To confuse things (or to spice things up, depending on your frame of mind), neither one is with the Cabochon cream and sugar. Both are in Catalog No. 33. One is shown as part of a sauce or jam set with three 1485 Saturn covered mustards (fig. 4). The other is used to make a 1485 condiment set.



For the compulsive among us, it makes it tricky to decide when you have completed a Cabochon cream and sugar set. There are four combinations offered by Heisey of cream and sugar with or without cover and with or without tray. I suppose the truly obsessed could go for all four combinations. What was it I was saying about challenges?



The pattern was popular, as 22 years of production between two companies attests. That means creams and sugars in crystal are not too difficult to find. When colors were resurrected in the 1950's, some pieces of Cabochon were among the chosen few. Fortunately for the collectors who like the color, Cabochon creams and sugars were made in Dawn (fig. 5). Neither of the two pieces is very common in this color. For some reason, I've

seen several more creams than sugars in Dawn, but that may be just luck of the draw. I have never seen a Dawn cover for the sugar, but it is certainly possible they were made. As for Limelight, a 1955 price list shows the candy box made in this color, but does not mention cream or sugar, and I doubt those were ever made. A very few pieces of 1951 Cabochon appear in Sultana, but I have not heard of the cream or sugar being among them. The blown, heavy-footed sodas, juices, tumblers, and the like in 6092 Cabochon are where you will more easily find that color, and even those are hard to come by. Imperial made Cabochon only in crystal.

Cabochon is a plain pattern, evidently too plain for some people. Several decorations will be found on it. The cream and sugar are sometimes seen with other companies' work, usually simple cuttings or a bit of silver. Heisey's own 507 Orchid and 515 Heisey Rose etchings appear on the Cabochon butters, but I haven't seen a listing for them on the cream or sugar. The idea of table sets was long past, so that isn't too surprising. Among cuttings available on the Cabochon creams and sugars are 941 Barcelona, 980 Moonglo, 1015 Dolly Madison Rose, 1025 Arcadia, 1070 Bel-Air, 1072 Southwind, 1091 Wheat, 1092 Melody, and 520B Leaf (a Zeisel design; the only illustration I'm aware of for this cutting is in Viola Cudd's 1969 book, long out of print). There are possibly others, although not every cutting that appeared on Cabochon was used on the creams and sugars. Imperial creams and sugars can be found with their C837 Denise cutting (fig. 6). None of the cuttings were listed for covered sugars, only open ones, so don't go looking for lids for these sets. Trays weren't listed with the cuttings, either.

(Editor's Note: The Museum does own a Cabochon cream and sugar with cover with 515 Rose etch. In the benefit auction this Spring there was an uncovered set with 507 Orchid etch – but the glass quality was very poor and the etching very dark.)

Cabochon was also good for misspelling. Even in one of the typed price lists from the factory, you can see that the typist first pecked out

"Cabachon" and then corrected that second "a" to an "o". It's a mistake you see repeated in some old HCA newsletters and one that lives on today. For 22 years, sales clerks had to remember how to spell it, and probably had to teach their customers to spell and pronounce it. Gee. Geometry and spelling. Who knew Heisey was so active in education?

#### Vital Statistics

Cream: Height (excluding spout), 3 1/8"; width (top), 3 1/8"; length (handle to spout), 4 3/4"; foot (side to side), 1 7/8"; foot (corner to corner), 2".

Sugar: Height (without cover), 3 1/8"; height (with cover), 4 1/8"; diameter, 3 1/4"; width (handle to handle), 5"; foot same as cream.

Do you have that Dawn sugar cover? You can brag about it, in a breezy manner, of course, at [heisey@embarqmail.com](mailto:heisey@embarqmail.com).