

355 QUATOR CREAMS AND SUGARS

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One day I was talking with Walter Ludwig when he proposed that I write a recurring cream and sugar article for the Newsletter. "Surely," I thought, "there must be someone better for this than I." I've never specialized in creams and sugars. Offhand, I know of several Heisey collectors with much better C&S collections.

(That's the difference between we casual cream and sugar collectors and the elites. We write "cream and sugar" but they write "C&S.") The man must be desperate. Soft touch that I am, I agreed.

So what to write about first? I was working near some Heisey - hard not to in our house - when the little individual cream and sugar in the 355 Quator pattern caught my eye. Perfect. This would be my debut entry. How much can you say about such a simple pattern, all squares and angles and not much else? Ahem.



Figure 1

Among the most recognizable and distinctive of Heisey's many cream and sugar sets are those in 355 Quator. Heisey never used a name for the pattern. Vogel named it Quator, derived from the Latin quatuor, meaning "four." A distinguishing characteristic of most 355 Quator pieces is their four-sidedness. (It is this distinction, along with the gap in production dates, which separates 355 Quator from the earlier 355 Bordeaux. Bordeaux pieces were in production around 1905 and featured round, smoothly curved bowls set on 6-sided stems. They functioned as bon bonnieres or as champagnes. They had been dropped some years before Quator began production about 1912. Quator had no stemware. Not everyone follows this distinction.) Quator emphasized angularity in

many of its pieces. Heisey being Heisey, there are exceptions, of course. The 355 crushed fruit is simply the 354 footed bottom with a hollow cover rather than a knobbed cover. The 24 oz. and 32 oz. syrups or chocolate pot are identical but for size to the 354 syrups. The ash tray and match holder has nothing angular about it.

We first see Quator creams and sugars in Catalog 75, ca. 1913. Only the hotel and individual sets, the ones with the angled handles, are illustrated there (Fig. 1). The hotel sets are easily the most common of the Quator family. Quator creams and sugars last appear in Catalog 109, ca. 1926 or a little later, and in that catalog we also see the footed cream and sugar set. Production continued into the early 1930s.

Inevitably, all the Quator creams and sugars are described as Art Deco, as well they should be. Interestingly enough, however, the hotel and individual creams and sugars were patented in 1912; many pieces of both sizes bear the patent date inside the bottom. This much pre-dates the 1925 Parisian exhibition which lent its name to the Art Deco style. In this case, at least, Heisey was a style leader. The simplicity of the design enables the individual cream and sugar to be nearly perfect miniatures of the hotel cream and sugar, with few adjustments in proportion. If you are buying from photos, make sure you understand the size you are getting before you buy.



Figure 2

The drawing included here (Fig. 2) is taken from Catalog 75. Notice the swirling star shown; the same star is shown on the bases of both the hotel pieces. I have never seen a star of this shape on any Quator cream or sugar. Artistic license was not the rule in these books. In fact, drawings of many other patterns meticulously show the stars as they appear on actual production pieces, in many

of their wonderful variations. One suspects this particular star was a contemplated effect that was never produced - or was it? We see a swirling star in the 1170 Pleat and Panel spice tray, for instance. I believe the 8038 Roderick cream has a swirling star. Has anyone ever seen a similar one on Quator?

The large, plain surfaces of the hotel set made them good fodder for the decorating companies. Many interesting Art Nouveau and Art Deco designs can be found, especially as cuttings or applied silver. A fascinating collection could be built from these alone. A.H. Heisey & Company does not appear to have done much with them in their own shops. However, there is an enticing hint in a 1915 letter that directs Joseph Balda to create etching plates for them. If this was done, I don't know the design that was used.



Figure 3

The footed cream and sugar (Fig. 3), much different in concept, arrived at the height of the Art Deco movement and in time to be made in the popular colors of Moongleam, Flamingo, Marigold, and Sahara, as well as crystal. Marigold and Sahara are much harder to find than the others. (The hotel and individual sets were made only in crystal.) The footed sugar is quite a bit more common now than the footed cream. Part of this is probably due to the fact that the sugar was also marketed on its own as a bon bon. The foot is a dramatic trapezoidal block which directly holds the bowl, with no intervening stem as seen on most patterns. Even the handles of the sugar/bon bon exude Art Deco, forming small triangles on a plane with the top of the piece. The idea was for foot and handles to be organically part of the entire design. Bowing to practicality, the designer gave the cream an angular, more traditionally shaped handle, although it looks a bit out of place.

Seldom ones to miss an opportunity, Heisey

made one more sugar in 355 Quator, and this was a domino sugar. For various reasons, I'll leave this one to a later time when I consider the domino sugars all together. It is shown bottom row right in Fig. 4.



Figure 4

For all that, Heisey did not produce a table set in 355. The table sets typically included creams and sugars larger than the hotel sizes, but none of these oversize pieces are to be had in 355. Nor were any of the Quator sugars ever covered. Even as early as 1912, fewer new patterns included table sets, and before many more years had passed, sugar covers became more dispensable, too.

So, that about does it for Quator. Except there are those 1469 Ridgeleigh pieces that came out of Quator...another pair, another time.

Vital statistics:

Hotel sugar - Height, 3 1/8"; top width (side-to-side), 2 5/8"; base width (side-to-side), 2 7/8"; width from handle to handle, 6 3/4". The body of the hotel cream, excluding handle and spout, has the same measurements. Ground bottoms.

Individual sugar - Height, 2 3/8"; top width (side-to-side), 2 1/8"; base width (side-to-side), 2 1/4"; width from handle to handle, 5 1/4". The body of the individual cream has the same measurements. Ground bottoms.

Footed sugar (bon bon) - Height, 2 3/8"; top (excluding handles), 3 5/8" x 4 1/4"; base, 2 3/4" x 3 1/4". Fire-polished bottom.

Footed cream - Height, 2 3/8"; top (excluding handle and spout), 3 3/8" x 4"; base, 2 1/2" x 2 7/8". Fire-polished bottom.

Some say "kwah-tor," some say "kway-tor" - let's call the whole thing off. But wait. Fred and Ginger didn't, and neither should we. Let's call it back on, at heisey@embarqmail.com.