

# DinnerWear Jewelry takes broken antique china and turns it into beautiful necklaces, earrings, brooches and lariats

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FRANKLIN, MASS., UNITED STATES, April 16, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- FRANKLIN, Mass. – For most people an antique china plate, cup or saucer that's been chipped, cracked or broken might be trash. But for Mary-Ann Wood it's treasure. Wood is the owner of a business called [DinnerWear Jewelry](#) that uses designs cut from these fractured unfortunates and turns them into unique [costume jewelry](#) pieces, mostly necklaces, earrings, lariats and brooches.

“The jewelry pieces I craft aren't just one-of-a-kinds and beautiful, they carry great sentimental value to the wearer,” Wood said. “They are worn, shared and passed on. The fact that each piece has been made by hand from a china piece that's probably been in the family for years or even generations only makes it that much more special. It's very gratifying for me and the customer.”



A bride puts on an earring at what was a vintage-themed wedding. The bridal party all wore earrings and bracelets from DinnerWear Jewelry.

Wood works out of a spacious studio in Franklin, Mass., with hours by appointment, and is fast coming up on her 20th year in business, the last three of which have been dedicated full-time to DinnerWear Jewelry. Prior to that she split her time between jewelry design and the longtime family picture framing business, begun by her mother and father in 1968 and closed in 2015.

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Now, she has a loyal following, mostly the result of the arts and crafts fairs and other events she attends in Massachusetts and elsewhere in the region. Her fan base will only get bigger with the launch of a website, [www.DinnerWearJewelry.com](http://www.DinnerWearJewelry.com), that's attracting new business.

An expanded menu now features alternative bridal bouquets and men's jewelry, mainly tie tacks and cuff links.

The idea for repurposing old, degraded china pieces into lovely wearable jewelry (that is also often a family heirloom) is one that developed over time. "Many children are fascinated with fancy dinnerware and tea sets, and I was no exception," Mary-Ann said. "I always wanted to help set the table for Sunday and holiday dinners with grandmother's 'best china' and silver."

It was then, as child, that she started her own personal collection of china. It should be noted that Mary-Ann grew up in a nurturing, art-filled environment. Her father, before he went into picture framing, was an engineer who helped build the New England Aquarium, among other projects. Her mother was a watercolorist who produced art and taught art classes at the framing studio.

Her father did work with leaded glass windows and passed on to his daughter an appreciation for glass and the skills to become an artisan. "Dad taught me how to solder at age 13," Wood said. "He was quite the craftsman. He repurposed all the marbles at the aquarium, which had been installed in error, and re-sold them to the gift shop, where they were retailed as marine objects."

Inspired by her father, Mary-Ann became a glass artist, a pastime she pursued on the side while helping run the picture framing business, but over time she found glasswork to be tedious and time-consuming. "Plus it was a crowded field," she pointed out. "Everybody was making these wonderful mosaics and other glass creations. I wanted something new, but I didn't know what."

Wood was born with a keen eye for geometry and the way things fit together, as well as an appreciation for beautiful and artistic creations. "I've always been fascinated by working with tools, and I've always wanted to repurpose things," she said. "I'd buy vintage clothing that was way too large, for example, and cut it down into something I could wear that had my stamp."



Lariats are a popular DinnerWear Jewelry item because they're adjustable, go easily over the head and one size fits all.



This Belleek Irish china piece in a sterling silver cuff bracelet is beautiful and unique -- and it's a keepsake.



So the interest and the talent was there from an early age, and it evolved over time with regard to her china collection. "In later years I started to play with cups and saucers in a different way," she said. "I had a lot of broken pieces, and I hated the thought of just throwing them away. I wanted to do something with the pretty designs on them. That's what led to my Eureka moment."

Through much trial and error, Wood taught herself how to cut the plates, carving out the bits she liked most. Not satisfied with just making broken-looking shards, she concentrated on enhancing the intricate details of each pattern. "I was hooked on the challenge," she said, but in the end, she was still just sitting there with lovely little designs cut from china. "Now what?" she wondered.

And so was born the idea of designing china pieces into wearable jewelry, in 1998. "My work has become more refined over the years, and my jewelry selection has grown," she said. "I strive to add new items to the collection, keeping it fresh. I'm always hunting for new patterns. I look for variety in floral motifs and color themes and I try to represent as many countries as possible."

The process of turning a chipped or cracked piece of china into a beautiful, wearable jewelry item is, understandably, a precise and painstaking task. It's one that involves many tools, each one serving a specific purpose for cutting different materials. These include saws, grinders, files and drills. It's slow and delicate work. Each piece is cleaned in-between steps of hand-carving.

Final detailing enhances each piece before it becomes jewelry. And then – voila! – the end result: a treasured piece of jewelry that the user can not only appreciate for its beauty and significance as a family heirloom, but actually wear, literally wrapping oneself in personal family history. "I call it bringing the past into the present," Mary-Ann remarked, "and who can't appreciate that?"



Mary-Ann Wood painstakingly hand-crafts every DinnerWear Jewelry item she sells, using equipment like the drilling machine she's working at here.



A woman turned her recently deceased grandmother's teacups into pendant necklaces, which she gifted to her sisters as keepsakes.

Wood said it took her about a year and a half to develop her own style, “the free-form carving of the shapes”, and she’s entirely self-taught. One of her first notions was to create mosaics, but she said there were thousands of artisans already doing it, plus she decided glass just wasn’t for her.

At any given time there are around 350 pieces in online inventory and inventory for shows. At times she runs across a teacup or cup and saucer that’s simply too beautiful and intact to cut. Those she offers for sale through an online business, [www.VintageTeacupShop.com](http://www.VintageTeacupShop.com). Visitors to the site are then re-directed to Etsy, with whom she partners, to browse and make a purchase.

Mary-Ann does a lot of [bridal and wedding parties](#). DinnerWear jewelry makes a great gift for the mother of the bride or an accent item pinned to the bride’s bouquet. She’s also ventured into custom bridal bouquets, an alternative to traditional fresh-cut flowers. Her bouquets have flowers fashioned from family china, carved from the floral patterns on the plates, often with a jewelry piece, pearl or crystal in the center.

Wood gets helpful assistance from her husband, Mark, who goes with her to the crafts fairs and shows, setting up and tearing down the DinnerWear Jewelry display booths. Caity, her right-hand assistant, has the technical know-how that’s led to a substantial Facebook following. She updates the website, social media and Etsy listings, helps with promotions and manages things while Mary-Ann’s away. A part-time helper, Lisa, helps out at fairs and shows and pitches in at the studio, on an as-needed basis. “I don’t know what I’d do without their support,” Wood said.

The prices for custom-made pieces are quite reasonable. They start at \$78 for a pendant and \$95 for earrings. “I use a lot of Swarovski crystal in my designs, so obviously the cost for those pieces is going to be higher,” Wood said. But when one stops to consider what they’re actually buying – a gorgeous family keepsake in the form of wearable jewelry – well, that’s priceless.

For more information, or to make a purchase, please visit [www.DinnerWearJewelry.com](http://www.DinnerWearJewelry.com).

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