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**Sitting Pretty:
A Celebration
Of the Porch**

**Hundreds
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Real Estate
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**Landscape
Lighting 101:
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**Junes's
FEATURED
Listing**

LONGUE VUE FARM, CROTON-ON-HUDSON, NEW YORK
(LISTED BY BRUCE DOLLAR, HOULIHAN LAWRENCE. SEE PAGE 31 FOR DETAILS.)



Retro-inspired trays feature **POLKA DOTS** and Pucci-esque prints.

FUNCTIONAL FURNISHINGS

Serving trays take the guesswork out of entertaining.

BY CAITLIN KIERNAN, PHOTOGRAPH BY LINDA BELL HALL

Lot 943: American and English Serving Trays (est. \$100–150). The Sotheby's estate catalog was scarce with specifics. And it couldn't have sounded less interesting. Except for one small detail: The trays had belonged to Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis.

As a result, these two nondescript trays delivered much more than the final bid of \$4,600. They served up images of a young senator's wife presenting iced tea to a bunch of good-looking Kennedy men playing football in Hyannis Port; a First Lady entertaining foreign dignitaries at the White House; and a style icon using the trays to stack her French novels onto ottomans in her chic Fifth Avenue apartment.

Today the serving tray is a sought-after commodity. Not since the 1950s, when serving trays were an essential cocktail accoutrement, have people taken advantage of their practicality, function, and quiet style. "Serving trays are very trendy right now," says Michele Sayres, interior designer and owner of Michele Sayres Design in Millbrook and New York City. "I think a lot of this has to do with ottomans and coffee tables."

In many homes the coffee table has been replaced by versatile, upholstered ottomans, with which we can, literally, kick up our heels and relax. However, this strategy poses one problem—an ottoman offers no solid surface on which to rest a cup of coffee, a small vase of flowers, or a dish of snacks. The serving tray resolves that issue. "That's why it's so perfect," says Sayres. "It provides stability, plus it comes in many sizes, styles, and price points."

Sue Gugliuzza, a client of Sayres's, owns more than 10 serving trays, which can be found scattered throughout her home. "I use them all the time," says Gugliuzza. "Two hold magazines. One I use in my bathroom to put my perfumes on. One I use by the grill, another for by the pool. I use a lot of them all over the place."

But her favorites are two square wooden trays from Pier 1 decorated in an Asian-floral motif that rest permanently on the ottoman in her family room. "They add interest because of their

design," says Gugliuzza. "Plus, they are really pretty besides being functional."

With increasing popularity, retailers from Target to Tiffany's are seeing serving trays deliver stockholder-happy numbers. "Trays have always been a big seller for us but we have seen an increase in popularity," says Christiane Robinett of Pier 1. "It's an easy little thing you can do to add style to serving drinks or sushi. We have ten different trays, all that sell for around \$12 to \$15, and each one does very well."

Pier 1 isn't alone. Target offers a broad online selection, with prices ranging from \$16 to \$100. Neiman Marcus offers a \$540, multicolored china tray designed by the fashion house Etro. Fortunoff's sells a sleek, oblong metal-alloy tray from Nambé for \$199. And Sur la Table's \$30 black-lacquered wood tray with red trim is in such demand that it's on back-order.

With summer, serving trays will resume their pivotal role in outdoor entertaining. Many retailers offer fun, colorful plastic trays that are child-friendly, water-resistant, dishwasher-safe, and—get this—conversation starters. Fineliving.com offers funky "French Bull Platters" designed by Jackie Shapiro. These retro-inspired trays, which cost \$16, feature polka dots, Pucci-esque prints, and a pastel plaid palette. Crate and Barrel's \$40 Mercer Platter, with its candy-colored, psychedelic swirls, is equally entertaining.

For upscale, outdoor entertaining, like an evening cocktail party, Sayres suggests throwing caution to the wind by using the high-end tray outdoors. "Decorated with evergreen branches and candles, a serving tray transforms into an elegant centerpiece," she says. "It's a way to bring texture, style, and color to a table. It provides it with great presence."

By utilizing serving trays in such imaginative ways, we reflect our personalities, style, and attitude. And though discreet, the trays' message isn't lost on our guests.

"They imply hospitality, sharing, and service," says Sayres. "They are functional but beautiful—and all of those aspects appeal to us." ■