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Silver That's Right

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Reflect you in your home

Editor's note: To help you now as you fill your hope chest, plan shower gifts, tell wedding guests your choices, and finally as you and your husband complete your "musts," this section on silver, linen and equipment is planned.

*with silver
with linen
with equipment*

Silver that's right

by Karla Baur

Foods and Nutrition sophomore

ANY BRIDE is thrilled to discover fine, gleaming silverware when she unwraps your wedding gift. It will adorn her table three times a day — everyday — and grow even lovelier as she uses it. Silverware is a lifetime investment in beauty and service.

Traditionally there are two principal kinds of silverware, sterling silver and plated silver, but another type of ware, stainless steel, is finding its way to the American dining table. Although stainless steel ware does not yet share the wedding present tradition of sterling, dealers report its growing popularity.

These are the questions most frequently asked about the kinds of ware.

What are the advantages of stainless steel ware?

Utility is the big feature of stainless steel ware. In normal household use, it remains bright and unstained and should last indefinitely. Unlike silver, stainless steel is not tarnished by eggs, other sulfur-containing foods or long exposure to air. It needs to be kept clean and dry to insure its permanent brightness and resistance to corrosion.

Are there general design characteristics for each type of flatware?

Stainless steel ware is usually simple and functional. Complex patterns common in silver are not practical for stainless steel metal. However, many improvements have been made in its design since the days when stainless steel was fashioned principally as plastic-handled picnic ware.

Design-wise, there is as much variety in silver plate as in sterling. Both have many patterns from which to choose, traditional and modern, decorative and starkly simple.

How do flatware finishes vary?

All three types of silver, stainless steel, plated silver and sterling, are sold in three finishes — mirror (a highly lustrous finish), medium gloss, and satin or low-gloss finish. The choice is one of taste, but satin-finished silverware does have one clear advantage. Scratches from use are less apparent on it than on the mirror finish. However, the satin-finished ware is somewhat more expensive.

How do prices of the various types of flatware differ?

As prices go, plated silver usually runs under \$10 for a six-piece place setting, consisting of salad fork, dinner fork, butter spreader, dinner knife, teaspoon and soup spoon. It's worth remembering that the federal tax on sterling doesn't apply on silver plate or stainless steel. Stainless steel ware is similarly priced, although imported ware is sometimes more expensive. Sterling silver place setting prices usually begin at \$30, which is about three times the cost of silver plate. Sterling is sold by the amount of silver it contains by weight. More weight means more silver; more silver means more monetary value and durability.

