



A wall of Fiesta ware colors the warehouse of Replacements Photography courtesy Replacements

PRO Visits

At This Sprawling Warehouse, Heirlooms Never Die—They Just Get Replaced

For collectors seeking obscure mates to their broken or lost tabletop items, Replacements stocks more than 11 million pieces of dinnerware

By Alia Akkam

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Bob Page loathed his job as an auditor for the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services, but sourcing hard-to-find [dinnerware](#) for a burgeoning clientele after-hours gave him great joy—so much so that in 1981 he abandoned the monotonous, albeit more lucrative, accounting post and launched [Replacements](#), a procurement business from his own home.

He stored his budding inventory in the attic, jotted down customer requests on index cards filed away in a recipe box, and started traveling to nearby cities like Nashville to scour flea markets. Seven years later, Page, who now resides in Florida, opened a storefront in McLeansville, North Carolina, and amassed a new stream of fans via word of mouth and newspaper articles.

“For Bob, it’s always been about the thrill of the hunt,” Scott Fleming, president of Replacements, tells AD PRO, and today its massive, treasure-packed headquarters is infused with that exhilarating air of discovery. Encompassing 500,000 square feet, the facility holds around 11 million [pieces of china](#), crystal, silver, and collectibles emblazoned in more than 425,000 patterns. Along with these shoppable pieces is a stash of rare selections—from 1930s Heisey crystal to Royal Winton chintz-ware.

“We never lost sight of the fact that the company was started by someone who did not like what they did for a living, and creating a workplace where people love what they do is embedded into our mission,” explains Fleming. “It’s about connection and meaningful relationships.”



Replacements' 425,000-square-foot headquarters features a storefront and dinnerware museum in addition to the warehouse and restoration facility. Photography courtesy Replacements



The shop's display cases have histories of their own. This backbar was purportedly once held court in J.P. Morgan's summer home. Photography courtesy Replacements

Many of the visitors to Replacements are drawn to its showroom out of nostalgic longing. One might be in search of a floral-trimmed Haviland Limoges porcelain saucer to stand in for an heirloom shattered years ago; another might want to bolster their collection of mix-and-match Fiesta Dinnerware with cups in a new saturated jade hue. Past the plate-lined entry wall are goods from a range of [legacy brands](#) like Corelle, Flora Danica, Mottahedeh & Co., and Wedgwood. And since 2018, estate jewelry has been a fixture there too.

Just as striking as the array of bowls, glasses, and [flatware](#) are the display cases, which have stories of their own. Some of them date back to the days of the Oklahoma Territory; others were salvaged from the jeweler Galt & Bro. A showstopping backbar purportedly once held court in the summer home of J.P. Morgan. “Our cases alone have a rich history,” says Fleming. “On our tour route we also highlight dinnerware used in film and television and that brings patterns to life. It’s another form of storytelling and preserving the past.”



The HQ's "Great Wall of China" showcases the purveyor's top 500 patterns. Photography courtesy Replacements



Can't identify your pattern? Upload a photo to the Replacements website and one of the company's 16 dinnerware experts will help identify your design. Photography courtesy Replacements

While the playfully dubbed “Great Wall of China” illuminates Replacements’ top 500 patterns behind glass, the other side delineates the company timeline, as well as awards, accolades, and civic initiatives. Sustainability is particularly important to the team, says Fleming: “Bob grew up poor on a tobacco farm, and we try not to make waste of anything.” This ethos is reinforced by the building’s solar panel—one of the largest in the state—and the biodegradable peanuts the company uses for packaging.



In addition to replacing dinnerware, the company can restore damaged china, silverware, and glassware. Photography courtesy Replacements



The restoration department repairs some 5,000 pieces per month. Photography courtesy Replacements

In the warehouse, a whopping 46,000 shelves occupy a space the size of eight football fields, each structure piled high with product. Its main aisle displays 46 different flags—a tribute to the international staff’s roots. The largest department is dedicated to [china](#), with more than 40 employees processing inbound shipments. “We never know what we’re going to get on any given day,” says Fleming. “It’s manually labor-intensive, making sure pieces are free of cracks and chips.”



Around the size of eight football fields, the warehouse stores some 11 million pieces of dinnerware in 425,000 patterns. Photography courtesy Replacements



Inbound shipments (part of the company's Sell to Us program) are reviewed for quality before being inventoried. Photography courtesy Replacements

Equally notable is the expansive restoration department, which Fleming admits “a lot of people don’t know we do or that it can even be done.” (Still, around 5,000 items are nursed back to health there each month.) Damaged glazes, for instance, can be solved by another kiln session, just as Replacements’ silversmiths embellish teapots with missing finials and repair bent fork tines. It’s a priceless service “because we are passing on a memory to folks,” muses Fleming. “It’s a piece of their family.”