

Belle NOËL

Inspiration

Magazine

Merry
Christmas

December 2018

CELEBRATING LA JOIE DE VIVRE

A collection of casino chips, Christmas ornaments, and French banknotes. The chips are in various colors (red, pink, white) and shapes (rectangular, octagonal, circular), some with embossed designs and numbers. The Christmas ornaments are red and silver. The banknotes are French, including a 50 Franc note. The items are scattered on a light-colored surface.

Casino Chips, Collectibles & **CHRISTMAS**

A Design Story

Written & photographed by Jacqueline deMontravel

If you are a *Belle Inspiration* reader, chances are you have a collection or two. There may be an endorphin for this profile when connecting with a special find that ignites the brain, probably located in the same segment as chocolate and love.

Those who find excitement in beautiful things get emotional when discovering a distinguished piece, perhaps in an obscure color or size, which must be acquired.

The home becomes a showcase for these treasures, where a constant rotation of personal finds is tantamount unless you want the hoarder rescue squadron to release you from an avalanche of keepsakes. Christmas is the ideal time to display your prized possessions and, perhaps, add some new collections to your list.

Decorating a festive home does not have to follow Christmas's primary colors and themes. Simply arrange your favorite pieces, add some seasonal elements, and you will have a holiday home like no other.

Lynn Goldfinger of Paris Hotel Boutique has been hitting the casino lately, but we don't mean the slot machine kind. She came across antique casino chips from France and was immediately smitten. "I'm obsessed with them because in all of my years as a collector, I have never seen the color-dyed ones," says Goldfinger.

For a purveyor of rare collectibles, Goldfinger's coronation of the casino chip assures its covet factor. "These were used as gaming chips in France circa the 1870s," she says. "They are extremely rare and hard to come by." The chips have the ability to transport to an illustrious, more elegant time when gamblers dressed in their fanciest garb over the flip flop crowd currently taking over gambling arenas.





The variety of geometric shapes have a mother of pearl shimmer, while the addition of hot colors delights the eye. "Mother of pearl casino chips are small works of art. I may place them in an apothecary jar, or on a fancy silver platter, and decorate with holly berries and pine to create a holiday feeling," says Goldfinger.

Playing with chips for the holiday is an assured bet, especially when grouping with corresponding accessories. They seem destined to be paired with vintage Christmas tree balls from the attractive interplay of color and texture. Their small size allows them to accentuate most any scheme.

For our dessert table, they add the right spot of color and intrigue to personalize the setting, allowing guests to spark conversation. Pull in some vintage French money, holiday greenery, and delicacies along with beautifully colored chocolate boxes by Louis Sherry that support the theme and you will have a table like no other.

"Quality vintage pieces never go out of style," says Goldfinger. "The mystique of a bygone era, of ballrooms and evening gowns, elegance and whimsy, can add to the magic of holiday season.

I think that what is so great about vintage versus new is that there are many beautiful things out there, but they don't have the provenance of loved old pieces. They don't have the soul."

Lynn's Favorite Finds for Inspired Holiday Décor:

- ~ Special finds can be used to spice up holiday décor with a touch of whimsy. For instance, antique or vintage trophies can serve as vases for beautiful holiday floral arrangements.
- ~ Fancy plateau dresser mirrors or silver platters take on a new life as centerpieces to display your favorite holiday treasures.
- ~ Antique glass cloches look fabulous holding your treasured ornaments.
- ~ Ornate antique and time-worn candlesticks make a beautiful statement in a grouping on a sideboard or dining table.





Lynn's Tips on Determining Value:

There are many factors in determining the value of antiques or collectibles. Supply and demand are certainly at the top of the list. Mother of pearl has become quite rare, as well as antique 19th century casino/gaming chips. The fact that these chips are quite rare and came from actual French casinos in the 1870s makes them highly sought after.

Collections Lynn Feels Connected to:

~ I gravitate toward unique and hard-to-find pieces that find a new life in my home. Anything from old portrait and landscape paintings, to old engraved trophies and antique French curiosities. Elements of surprise reflect your personality and avoid a staged setting.

~ My collection of glistening hotel silver with fancy hotel names or crests tells a story. A grouping of old hotel silver or key fobs from hotels that my family married in is quite sentimental to me and looks lovely in my home.

~ I love vintage signage and any pieces with script such as old French chocolat or display boxes - old French menus as well. Graphics are one of my favorite forms of art. The provenance combined with the old typography makes them extra special.

~ Collecting is quite personal. I've been collecting for as long as I can remember. I try to avoid a staged setting and fill my home with elements of surprise that reflect my personality. Two or more is considered a collection, and I have many! There are no rules - I just decorate with what I love.

*Hotel silver, antique casino pieces and money: www.parishotelboutique.com
Chocolate in tins: www.louissherry.com*





Photo: Anya Grzeskowiak

Lynn's Thoughts on Silver

Why will silver always be an enduring collectible?

Hotel silver is timeless. It captures the grandeur of an earlier time. It possesses a bit of romance as well - finding that special piece from the hotel where your parents honeymooned, or from an establishment that you have a special memory of.

For many, the attraction is visual: The worn patina, fancy crests and logos give these pieces so much character. And hotel silver is wonderful to serve with. It's more ornate, decorative and a much heavier grade than what's used now and will always remain a romantic collectible. Bringing hotel silver into the home reflects an earlier time and place and evokes memories of a bygone era.

How do you use your silver?

My hotel silver is displayed prominently throughout my home. The wonderful thing about hotel silver is that it doesn't have to be used for serving purposes only.

Water pitchers not only function as serving pieces, but I love using them as vases. Old handled coffee pots make pretty wooden spoon holders.

I mix and match my hotel flatware. I use it daily and for entertaining. Fancy coffee pots or teapots make everything from breakfast in bed to sipping tea at my desk, a special experience. Platters and ice buckets make wonderful display pieces.