

## Catching Up with the Curator: The Obama State China

[FEMALE SPEAKER]: And the name of the blue color --

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Is...

[FEMALE SPEAKER]: ...Kailua Blue.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: Awwww, Kailua Blue.

[FEMALE SPEAKER]: The soup tureen. Kailua Blue.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I like that. Getting a little Hawaiian, isn't it?

[LAUGHTER] [MUSIC]

MRS. OBAMA: It's here! The china is here. This is actually the first time I have seen everything all at once. We've seen bits and pieces of it. The color is just -- it's beautiful. You really -- you guys -- it really looks good. Sorry, I'm just taking a moment.

[LAUGHTER]

BILL ALLMAN [White House Curator]: Today we're talking about a brand-new state service of china.

The Obama State China Service is on the table here, to my left. This was specifically designed at the request of First Lady Michelle Obama to include some historic elements, some traditional elements, and some attempts at being modern and suitable to more modern cooking than perhaps some of the earlier state chinas that are regularly in use.

MRS. OBAMA: What the chefs were telling us is that, you know, the plate structure of some of the old china doesn't work for modern plating because the circumference is smaller. And so having something that matches what food service looks like today, in these days, was very helpful.

BILL ALLMAN: The first plate that you'd see on the table is a large gold-banded service plate with the Presidential Coat-of-Arms at the center. It's matched with a number of pieces that have a brand-new blue color. It's being called Kailua Blue by the First Lady in honor of the waters off the President's home state of Hawaii. It's a color that she selected to be modern but traditional enough that the china can be mixed and matched with the state chinas in the more traditional primary color pallet.

The manufacturer is in Antioch, Illinois, so --

The President: I've got all kinds of home connections here.

[FEMALE SPEAKER]: (affirmative). And we're to use that -- we're using it for Tuesday, for the Japan state dinner. That's why we're unveiling it.

BILL ALLMAN: There is a dinner plate. A white plate with just a gold rim that has the most historic precedent.

It was designed using a service that then-Secretary of State, James Madison, owned in 1806. It would have been a personal china, and was probably the service they used in the post-fire temporary White Houses, when they had to bring a lot of their own personal things to help fill up emergency government quarters. But it's done only in white relief, so it's -- again, it's a -- it's a modern statement using a 200-year-old motif.

MRS. OBAMA: We tried to tie in the old and the new. And I think this really does, in a way that's still elegant and I think will be timeless. So -- but you guys get the first look.

[FEMALE SPEAKERS]: Thank you.

BILL ALLMAN: The Presidential Coat-of-Arms appears, as is tradition, on the first plate you see on the table, the service plate, and the last items you see on a formal dinner table, which is the dessert plate at the far right, and the little cup and saucer here at the center that would be the tea or coffee that would be served with the dessert course.

So there are eleven pieces in the place setting. One new feature is a little individual tureen, and it's unprecedented in the china services that we have had in the White House up to this point.

MRS. OBAMA: But the tureen was something that -- the chef said, "One of the reasons we don't do soups or interesting creations like that -- because we don't have any way to serve it." So we're very proud of our tureen. Very Proud.

PRESIDENT OBAMA: I will compliment my wife. That's very nice.

[LAUGHTER]