

SHOPPING WITH

STEPHANIE AND BRUCE THARP

Bowls to Bark About

Even Kibble Can Be Served With Style

STEPHANIE and Bruce Tharp, the couple who run the Chicago design firm Materious, grew up with pets. She had two dogs, and he had a dog and a cat. Mr. Tharp, in fact, has lived with cats most of his life. ("People who don't like cats have had bad cats," he said. "I've been lucky to have had great cats.")

They don't have pets at the moment; with one child, and another on the way, they are otherwise occupied. But as the creators of award-winning products like the Cubby coat hook, they have strong opinions about what makes for good pet design. Especially when it comes to bowls.

Mr. Tharp is "a fan of the bowl that's not necessarily intended to be a pet bowl," he said, because it's often better looking, while his wife favors functionality. "It needs to be easy to fill and easy to clean," she said.

But they agreed that because of "the modern pet movement," as Mr. Tharp called it, "in the last 10 years, there are a lot more choices." And what's available, he said, is "much more interesting and diversified."

With that in mind, the Tharps set out to find the most interesting pet bowls their city has to offer.

At an upscale pet boutique on the Gold Coast called Tails in the City, the Cantilever Diner caught their eye. "I've never seen anything quite like this," Mr. Tharp said of the design, which was almost architectural. "It seems made for minimalists."

They also liked the white Woodsman Double Diner, which "has a little Barcelona thing going on," he said, referring to the furniture designed by Mies van der Rohe. "Visually, it's a clean, modern setup, and it's also functional. The bowls come right out, so it's easy to clean."

At Alessi, they picked out two bowls: Ron Arad's Babyboop bowl, which was designed to hold hors d'oeuvres, and the Miò cat bowl by Miriam Mirri.



ABOVE AND ABOVE RIGHT: PHOTOGRAPHS BY WILLIAM ZARREN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

FORM AND FUNCTION Stephanie and Bruce Tharp with the Woodsman Double Diner at Tails in the City, a store in Chicago; from \$115, (900) 266-1118, tailsinthecity.com.

Some Alessi products are "too cutesy," Mr. Tharp said. But they were both enthusiastic about the design of the cat bowl, a covered dish with an undulating base. "The space underneath is a really nice detail," he said.

Online, Ms. Tharp found a dog bowl by Michael Aram that she liked because of "the way he used the material," she said. But her favorite was the "clean and minimal" series of Smorgasboard bowls from Doca Pet, a Chicago company.

Mr. Tharp agreed, with one reservation. "They look like wood grain but are not actual wood," he said. "From an environmental standpoint, I wish they were."

Still, he said, they're "wonderfully modern with a little edge."

RIANA SUQU



Squishy silicone pet bowls; from \$10.95 at Guyot designs, (207) 348-1030, guyotdesigns.com.



Cantilever Double Diner; from \$76 at Tails in the City, (800) 266-1118, tailsinthecity.com.



Multi floral 3-tier Melamine Tiffen Box; \$19.99 at Target, (800) 440-0680, target.com.



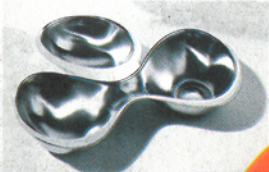
Y.bowl; from \$30, Doca Pet, (312) 493-7707, docapet.com.



Dog bone pet bowl by Michael Aram; from \$155, (212) 461-6903, michaelaram.com.



Smorgasboard; from \$67, Doca Pet, (312) 493-7707, docapet.com.



Babyboop hors d'oeuvre set by Ron Arad; \$94 at Alessi, (312) 274-6500, alessi-shop.com.



Miò cat bowl by Miriam Mirri; \$70 at Alessi, (312) 274-6500, alessi-shop.com.



Nambé cradle wine coasters; \$60, Gracious Home, (800) 338-7809, gracioushome.com.