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KOVELS ANTIQUES AND COLLECTING

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PHOTO CREDIT: Nye & Company

PHOTO CAPTION: Portugal has a long history
of making majolica, but modern pieces, like
this ruffled bowl from Alcobaca, are often
inexpensive.

European Majolica

Majolica, the famous tin-glazed earthenware pottery, gets its name from Majorca (Mallorca), the Mediterranean island off the east coast of Spain. Tin-glazed pottery was brought to Spain by the Moors and spread to Italy as early as the 14th century, then to the rest of Europe. By the 1800s, majolica was a phenomenon in Europe. Potteries throughout the continent were making pieces with brilliantly colored glazes, often with realistically molded flowers, plants, and animals.

Collectors seek these 19th-century ceramics by celebrated makers like Wedgwood and Minton in England or Sarreguemines in France. Portugal may be lesser known among locations for majolica makers, but it had some, too. Caldas da Rainha is known for its elaborate Palissy-style pieces with realistic three-dimensional decorations. Simpler majolica pieces are made, too, and can be a good option for bargain hunters.

This hand-painted ruffled bowl is marked for another Portuguese city, Alcobaca. While the city has a long history of ceramics, especially terra-cotta sculptures, this bowl was made in the 20th century and sold for \$31 at an auction by Nye & Company.

Q: How can I find out the value of a bracelet I inherited? It is 14K gold and has a Bliss Brothers mark.

A: For jewelry made of precious metals like gold, it's important to know the melt-down value. This is the wholesale value of the metal (and gems, if there are any) if the piece were destroyed and the material were sold for scrap.

You can find online "karat calculators" where you can enter the weight of your bracelet (most give the option of grams or ounces) and the purity of the gold (in your case, 14K) to find its melt-down value. The value depends on the weight of the jewelry and the current price of gold. Never



Portugal has a long history of making majolica, but modern pieces, like this ruffled bowl from Alcobaca, are often inexpensive

sell a piece of jewelry for less than its melt-down value. There are gold buyers who will buy jewelry for its melt-down value, but dealers who sell estate jewelry often pay higher prices. The workmanship and historic value of a piece of antique jewelry often make it worth more. A known maker's mark usually increases the value, too.

Bliss Brothers is a well-known jewelry maker. The company started in 1873 as Bliss Brothers & Everett. The name changed to Bliss Brothers Co. about 1887. They are known for their enameled compacts and gold-filled jewelry, but they also made some solid gold jewelry.

TIP: Most old majolica pieces have a colored bottom. The newer pieces have white bottoms.

CURRENT PRICES

Scale, beam, brass, two hooks, incised measurements, signed, L. Locke, 1800s, 25 1/2 inches, \$30.

Toy, train, Hornby, locomotive, tender, two open cars, clockwork, track, box, 1930s, \$180.

Coca-Cola, sign, bottle graphic, enamel on tin, frame, mid-20th century, 36 x 18 inches, pair, \$1,185.

Glass-Bohemian, punch bowl, dome lid, finial, underplate, blue, cut panels, enamel flower medallions, gilt scrolling trim, 10 1/2 x 12 inches, \$2,175.

For more collecting news, tips and resources, visit www.Kovels.com

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