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Jens Quistgaard's teak pepper mills

Mark Perlson

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Dansk and designer Jens Quistgaard spiced up the design world with an astonishing and highly influential series of salt and pepper mills. Mark Perlson's Danish Pepper - the first book to focus on Quistgaard - features beautiful photos and illustrations of Quistgaard's entire series and other designers' work in the area, accompanied by rich history of the mills and their creators. The book is a must for collectors of Danish Modern and an excellent addition to any design library.

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By Mark Perlson

With illustrations by Robert Chipman



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Written, designed, and photographed by Mark Perlson
Illustrations by Robert Chipman

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Printed in USA
ISBN 1-1234-1234-5

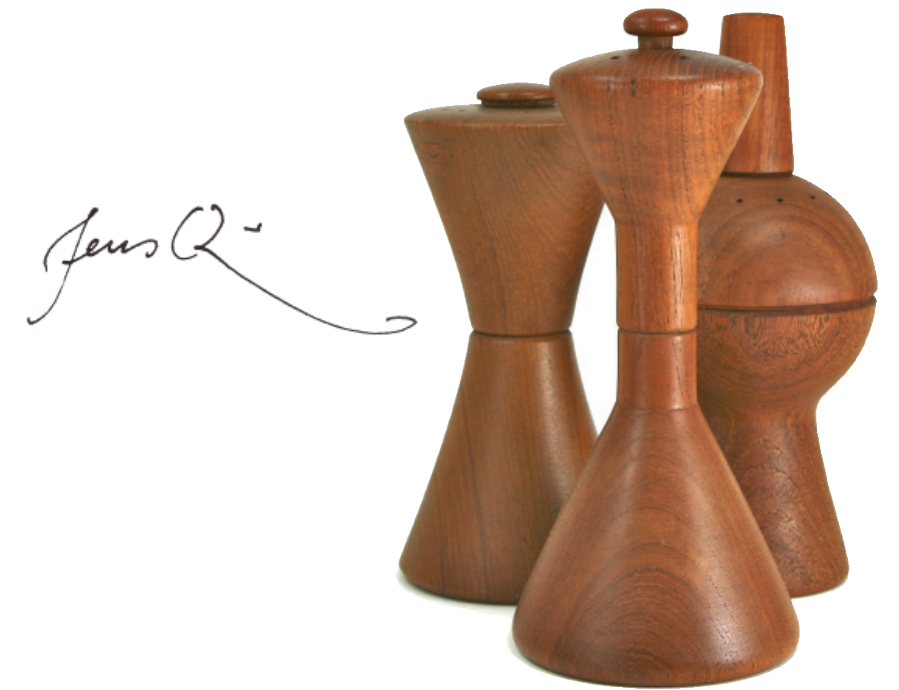


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Introduction

In the period between the late 1950s and the late 1970s, Jens Harald Quistgaard (JHQ) designed a series of combination pepper mill-salt shakers for Dansk. Beautiful, useful, and eminently collectible, these mills hold a unique place in the world of functional art. As Dansk said in a 1964 ad, "The top holds salt. The lower half grinds up pepper. Clever? Yes. But there's more to it than that... Each must be fresh. Dignified. Audacious, Timeless. Satisfying to behold."

Made from old growth teak and a series of other exotic woods, the mills were sculpted by JHQ's skilled hands. Each mill was the result of an intensive creative process - hundreds of designs were created, dozens of models were built, and only the few deemed up to the Dansk standard were produced. All in all, Dansk produced about 60 mills designed by JHQ as well as a handful by Gunnar Cyren. Dozens of other teak mills were produced by his contemporaries as well - some great, some mere knockoffs.

JHQ was a highly accomplished artist and craftsman, and although it might seem "below" one trained in sculpture to focus on housewares, he found them to be the perfect outlet for his craft. He says "To be a tabletop designer, you have to be a skilled and artistic craftsman. Today, it is the quality of a product that is appreciated, and it is up to the designer to make it art, as well as practical."

This book hopes to tell the story JHQ's mills in words and photography and hopefully open the door for a better understanding of his prodigious design output. This is the first book on JHQ or Dansk that has been published, and I hope to expand interest in JHQ and his work by making this information available for the first time.

Jens Quistgaard died on January 5, 2008, just a few weeks before this book was completed. He was 88 and still designing. This book is dedicated to his memory.



An illustration from the 1959 Dansk catalog featuring a pepper mill, Kobenstyle, Flamestone, and Fjord on a lacquered wood Festivaal tray.

Opposite. This 1961 Dansk ad featured a full page portrait of JHQ, celebrating 6 years as sole designer for Dansk.

Jens H Quistgaard

Although the likes of Hans Wegner and Finn Juhl could be credited as sparking the world's interest in Danish design, JHQ was the man who brought Danish design into American homes. His work with Dansk was the most successful of the entire Danish Modern movement - both in terms of longevity and sales. As a sculptor and designer trained in smithery, carpentry, pottery, and glass he was a true renaissance man able to take the finest materials and create a series of housewares that have not been equalled to this day.

JHQ followed the Danish ethos that a piece's design should be drawn from its function to create truly usable art. In order to mass produce his work, he had to collaborate with manufacturers in order to fill the post-war marketplace's demands. He did this to such success he was eulogized as Denmark's first industrial designer. Although many of his creations - and the ideas behind them - seem quite basic today, back then they were quite revolutionary and necessitated the mind of visionary as much as the hand of a fine artist and craftsman. JHQ has a unique combination of these skills, and his body of work has been highly influential in the design world. He has touched the millions of people around the world who still use his products on a daily basis.

Biography

Jens Harald Quistgaard was born April 23, 1919 in Copenhagen, Denmark. His mother was Lilli Berg, a painter, and his father was Harold Quistgaard, a professor of sculpture at the Royal Academy in Copenhagen. JHQ grew up with a strong artistic influence from his parents; even carving his own toys out of wood. In addition to his father's teachings, he received formal training in pottery, silversmithery, design, and carpentry; sometimes from the local village craftsmen.

By the time he was 14 he had his own forge and anvil, and at the young age of 15 created a set of knives that were ex-

hibited in the Charlottenburg Museum in Copenhagen. His talents were such that he was soon serving an apprenticeship at the highly prestigious Georg Jensen Smithy where he was able to further develop his craft. Two weeks before JHQ's 21st birthday, the Germans invaded Denmark and although the Danes didn't suffer as much as other some Europeans, life as usual was interrupted. JHQ spent the war as part of the Danish Underground, and his design career was put on hold. After the war ended, he spent several years as a freelance designer designing a line of flatware for Raadvad Knivfabrik as well as an early cast iron line that served as the basis for his later work.

The American entrepreneur Ted Nierenberg sought out JHQ after taking notice of a knife and fork design in the Copenhagen museum during a 1950 visit through Scandinavia. They met, and began discussing a business venture. Those discussions eventually led to the formation of Dansk Designs where he created an unbelievably varied and high quality range of designs in wood, metal, glass, and ceramics for over 25 years.

JHQ shared his time between his studio overlooking a canal in the older part of Copenhagen and his farm on the Southern coast of Denmark, where his studio is housed in a 200 year old restored farmhouse. This seaside retreat is where he kept his extensive collection of antiques, tableware, and furniture. He also had a barn full of the primitive, hand made carts, wagons, and tools that inspired so much of his work.

JHQ had over 4,500 of his designs put into production. His early career was marked by several prestigious exhibitions and awards, including the Lunning Prize in 1954. His work is part of many museum collections, including NY MoMA and the Louvre. Most of his products were produced by Dansk, but he also designed for Bing & Grøndahl, Georg Jensen, Es-lau Ceramics, Palshus Ceramics, Nissen, and many others.

Dansk Designs, Ltd

Dansk Designs was founded as a partnership of art and ingenuity. The Danish designer JHQ created prototypes of the Fjord line of flatware, but did not have the ability to produce them for commercial sales. He felt the melding of teak and metal too complicated to produce in any way but by hand, one at a time. But his associate for many years - the American Ted Nierenberg - saw an opportunity and was able to find a supplier with the ability to mass produce the design. By 1954 they had the line in production and a partnership was born. The work they did together is legendary and truly did redefine the entire top of table market. The story of Dansk and Jens Quistgaard's designs could be the subject of an entire book, so I will try limit this to providing a framework to understand the pepper mills in the context of all Dansk did.

Defining a Market

By 1962, Danish Modern style was all the rage in the US and the Dansk line had expanded to an impressive line of work - all designed by JHQ. The line included flatware, cookware, dinnerware, and a large selection of accessories in wood and metal. Dansk had very quickly become quite successful, building the brand on a foundation of quality and good taste with the unique aspect that the entire line "matched". You could outfit your home with Dansk and be assured that no matter which pieces you put together, you would have a coherent and modern look. As a 1961 ad said "Dansk designs are compatible... Notice how the copper, enamelware, stainless, and teak live perfectly together. The great uncluttered line of designer Jens Quistgaard runs through them like his signature."

Although the JHQ designs for Dansk didn't evolve dramatically past the mid 60s, the pepper mill collection continued to grow. They became a fun and creative way for JHQ to flex his design muscles. The mills were clearly positioned as a great gift idea. In light of this they needed to appeal to gift-givers year after year and were treated as a collectible piece. The idea of collecting was near and dear to JHQ's heart - himself a collector of Danish crafts - and it is clear that this appreciation inspired JHQ as he developed this rich series of mills over the years.

Dansk's strategy wasn't to produce subtly different versions of others' products and market them better. Dansk was focused on innovation in design and manufacturing, and as such they ended up changing an entire market. They were able to take the key elements of Danish design and create a line of products that truly impacted people's lives.

Partially because they are inside so much during the cold winter months, the Danes love



As do most Danes, JHQ loved the sea and spent as much time as possible at his farm, *Strandgaarden* (Danish for "farm by the sea").



The original Dansk logo was hand drawn by JHQ in 1954. The family of four ducks represent the unified family of Dansk products. The three lines signify the three major canals of Copenhagen.

simple, comfortable goods and prize the time they spend together with their family, particularly at mealtime. JHQ was able to focus this idea of comfort and warmth through an innate understanding of both the materials he was working with and the emotional and rational needs of the user. Today we call this focus on simplicity and ergonomics “user centered design”. The idea of “form follows function” and the unadorned look that followed from it was well known in JHQ’s time. The Danish designers were able to inject a level of warmth and emotion to this idea, displaying a true understanding of the user needs, not just the functional requirements of the piece. Under the vision of JHQ, Dansk’s innovations in manufacturing, materials, and lifestyle are numerous and still impact us today.

Dansk’s designs led to a shift in how people were able to use and relate to their housewares, and really had an impact on American lifestyles. Prior to Dansk, people had utilitarian pots and pans hidden in the kitchen and elegant, traditional serving dishes for the dining room. Kobenstyle was the first oven-to-table line of cookware. They touted the fact that the lid could be used as a trivet to further reinforce this concept. Brightly colored and highly sculptural, Kobenstyle was a great accessory to facilitate the modern way of living. The entire line played into this idea of a modern Dansk lifestyle - from the sculptural pepper mill to the brightly colored Fesitvaal enamel serving trays. Their pieces were useful high art - allowing people to live and entertain with simplicity and taste in an entirely new way. The 1969 Dansk catalog summed this up perfectly, “Dansk Designs for your kind of life, where casual and elegant are divided by the finest lines. And where the loveliest of things you own can cross the line with ease.”

Staved Teak

Dansk took their innovative approach in the creation of the hugely successful and iconic staved teak line. Although teak had been used for centuries as an ideal wood for kitchen tools, JHQ was able to put ancient barrel making “staving”

techniques to use with teak to create this new line. Due to teak’s density and high oil content, it had been impossible to glue teak pieces together. This meant that all teak bowls and utensils had to be carved out of a single piece of wood. Although many great pieces were carved out of a single piece of teak, the technique had several issues. First of all, the wood removed to form the piece was wasted; which became very expensive as well as deleterious to shrinking forests. Secondly, the integrity of the piece was dependent on the potentially unreliable grain of the wood, meaning that cracking was more likely as the piece aged. And finally, it took a very large, perfectly grained piece of wood to make a quality piece, meaning the raw materials needed for mass production very difficult to find and expensive.

The way to get around the high oil content in the wood turned out to be a newly available modern epoxy. The epoxy glue was very strong and was able to form a water-tight seal. By gluing together expertly mitered pieces of wood, JHQ was able to create a super strong piece that had very little waste, took full advantage of the grain of the wood, and was beautiful at the same time. The craftsmen chose the alternating staves with great care so that each bowl became its own artistic statement. This technique yielded a line of useful accessories with an entirely new look. The staved teak joinery is so strong that cracks in the older pieces are usually along the wood grain, rather than where the pieces are glued up. As Quistgaard said in a 1982 interview, “It’s a very scientific process. The wood has to be specially crafted, and each piece is kept in a temperature-controlled room until it is finished.”

Corporate History

Due to the fact that most early pieces were made in Denmark and the name of the company means “Danish” in Danish, many mistakenly assume Dansk is a Danish company. However, Dansk is an American company - with a name representing the fact that they produce work by Scandinavian designers. Dansk’s original headquarters were on Long Island in Great



Neck, New York. As the company grew over a period of 10 years, they eventually moved their headquarters upstate to Mt. Kisco, NY around 1965. They also maintained offices in Hamburg and London, JHQ’s design studio in Copenhagen, and also a Paris office for a while. The company was originally called Dansk Design, Inc and the name evolved to Dansk Designs, LTD around 1964, eventually becoming Dansk International Designs, LTD around 1977.

This 1961 ad shows the key pieces of the Dansk line designed by JHQ. Pictured are several pieces from the staved teak line, select Flamestone pieces, a place setting of Fjord, a rare copper pot, an early entry in the Design with Light line, and a teak & bamboo cane pepper mill.

Dansk has been around 55 years. 30 with JHQ and Ted Nierenberg at the helm, 25 since they sold the company in 1984. The company is now much smaller but still going strong. It has been sold a few more times, and is now part of the Lenox group. You can purchase Dansk goods through www.dansk.com as well as at retailers such as Macy’s and Bed, Bath, & Beyond. Dansk has continued to focus their line around designers, recently working with architect Michael Graves. Dansk still has a few JHQ lines of flatware in production, including Variation V, Odin, and they recently reintroducing Kongo - featuring enameled metal handles in place of the original nylon.

JHQ Pepper Mills

Pepper is made from the fruit of the pepper plant. The unripe berries are boiled and then dried in the sun to create peppercorns. The aromatic compounds in pepper evaporate quickly, so it is important that peppercorns be kept whole and that exposure to light is minimized for maximum taste. As such, it's best to crush or grind them right before you use them. Although spice mills were used for pepper in European kitchens as early as the 14th century, the mortar and pestle was historically the most common method for crushing pepper. Quality pepper mills were being manufactured since the middle of the 19th century and were used regularly in Europe, but it wasn't until the post World War II era that the pepper mill became a common tabletop accessory in the US. A Lenox China ad from 1957 puts the evolution of the pepper mill in perspective by saying, "You Grandmother never dreamed of such a thing... lovely china Pepper Mill Sets by Lenox." It goes on to contrast the old view of a pepper mill as a mundane household machine - like a butter churn, iron or a plow - with the wonderful flavors that it provides. The implication is that these new mills - the first to match perfectly with china patterns - were in line with the new style and were as wonderful as the spice that they ground. As an interesting side note, this ad features a salad bowl with a Dansk Fjord serving set, presumably to reinforce Lenox's modern credibility.

Uncommon Form

JHQ was designing the Dansk line with great success taking household items and re-imagining them through new materials and sculpted forms. It is in this mind set that he tackled the problem of what a "Dansk" pepper mill would be. The basic design concepts which serve as the conceptual building blocks of the JHQ's line - combining the salt shaker with the pepper mill and the attention on modern forms - we already in the marketplace to a certain extent. For the holiday season in 1955, Bloomingdales was advertising a house brand 12" tall

palisander rosewood pepper mill with a somewhat modern form, and Towle had a sterling silver and paduk wood combination salt shaker and pepper mill in its "designed for using" hollowware line. It was up to JHQ to take these concepts to the next level - combining the finest materials and creating forms that aligned artistically with the rest of the Dansk line.

JHQ was able to do this with the pepper mills. All in all, there are about 60 mills in the collection. Some early examples are just pepper mills, some are shakers to go with the mills, some are made from exotic wood - but the vast majority are salt shaker pepper mill combinations made from teak. None of his mills are the "traditional" pepper mill shape, with a rounded or flared top and turned wood body that is basically a very short staircase baluster. He also avoided the "Turkish coffee grinder" look of the mills that had a small metal handle on the top of a one piece body. His mills used basic geometric shapes and thus were more evocative of modern architecture or aerodynamic aircraft - different enough for people to wonder just what they might be. The mills are often compared to chess pieces, although there is no indication that the traditional chess forms were an influence on JHQ in the creation of the mills. Through form, materials, and construction, JHQ was truly able to create a series of (as the 1964 ad states) "unique seasoners".

Apart from the mills' sculptural forms, there is a major functional element that sets his mills apart from the vast majority of mills created both before and after. This is that none of his mills have the traditional exposed "finial" on the top that allows one to easily unscrew the entire unit and fill it with pepper. JHQ was able to remove the need for this extra hardware by gluing the metal shaft that turns the rotor into a wooden plug, which is in turn glued into the top half of the mill.

Removing the finial makes it impossible to allow for the adjustment of the grind. While some might see this as a negative, Dansk was able to spin it as an improvement. Their ad

copy states, "Each mill is pre-set to a medium grind because that's how pepper tastes best. No re-adjustments, no chunks - just a smooth, even sprinkling of pungent grains". That thought perfectly illustrates a philosophy that sets great designers apart from typical feature-focused engineers. On one level it seems more desirable to be able to adjust the mill just how you like it, but it really is a better experience if the mill looks beautiful and works perfectly.

Another side effect of removing the finial is that you can no longer unscrew the top to fill the mill. As such, most of the mills use a hole in the bottom to fill them. However, many of the mills use his signature teak plugs for filling with salt and pepper, which are incorporated into the design in such an integrated manner that they become an emblematic part of the overall design rather than a piece of extraneous hardware. Perhaps he was thinking of these plugs when he said, "A branch never sticks out of a tree; it flows out."

The Wood

The old growth Siamese (Thai) teak used to create these pieces is one of the most durable and beautiful woods found in nature. Old growth teak takes over 120 years to mature, and the value of these trees was not lost on JHQ. Teak is relatively easy to work with, richly colored, and wonderfully grained. It's natural oil content makes it highly resistant to water - so much so that it remains stable after months in the hot sun or even submerged in ocean waters. The decks of the Titanic were made out of teak, and the wood is as good today on the bottom of the ocean as it was the day the ship sank. These characteristics make it the perfect material for marine building - and they also assure it will perform perfectly in the hot and humid kitchen environment.

In addition to Siamese teak, Dansk also used other materials. A notable early series was the Cane & Teak series, which paired bamboo inlays with teak frames. Most impressive and expensive was Dansk's Rare Woods series, which included palisander (rosewood), wenge, mutenye, pao rosa, and cocobolo from Central America and Africa. The series consisted of trays, bowls, servers, and a few mills. They were quite expensive when new, and are among the most sought after Dansk pieces today.

It should be noted that many of these woods - especially the old growth teak - are now endangered. They were rare in the 60s, and are practically gone today. Most teak you see today is harvested from plantations. The natural growing teak forests in Thailand have shrunk to 1/200th of their original size and are now illegal to use for wood harvesting. Teak is still being harvested from forests in Myanmar (formerly Burma), but this wood is illegal to import to the US due to Myanmar's human rights violations. Teak also grows naturally in India, China, and Laos. Palisander is mostly unavailable on the market as well.



This Dansk promotional photo shows the mills in a still life with a baby chick.



The leaves of a teak tree.

Photo by J.M. Garg

Dansk was way ahead of its time in regards to its approach to this precious resource. Even the "Rare Woods" branding of the series speaks to their attitude. The company followed an environmentally conscious policy towards their use of the wood.

The Grinder Mechanisms

Dansk chose Peugeot of France - arguably the finest manufacturer of pepper grinders in the world - to produce grinders for their mills. Peugeot was founded in 1810 by the same family that eventually founded the famous car manufacturer, which still shares the familiar Lion logo. Early in their history, the company made various wood and metal tools, including coffee grinders, and came out with their first table pepper mill in 1874.

Peugeot pepper mills in many styles are still readily available today, but the mechanical design has not fundamentally changed since the 19th century. The grinding mechanism is in the form of a double row of "helicoid" teeth, which guide the pepper grains while they are being crushed. The pepper corns are first cut in half by widely spaced teeth, then into smaller flakes by thinly spaced teeth. This creates a very fluid feel as the mill is turned and consistent grind to the pepper. Peugeot mills are very durable due to a special patented process to treat the grinder, which both protects the steel from corrosion and prevents wear that would dull the blades. In rare instances, Dansk mills can be found with mechanisms by the Italian company Tre Spade - another venerable European manufacturer that has been around since 1894.

Good Design

Although the pepper mill - salt shakers represent a small portion of JHQ's total design output, they are emblematic of his work and typify the vocabulary of his design language. Perhaps because they work so well as a series, or perhaps because they are individually so beautiful, they perfectly demonstrate JHQ's ability to turn everyday objects into true works

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of art. Designed to enhance the modern lifestyle, his products take advantage of traditional style and workmanship. It is his keen ability to let the natural material speak for itself that brings out warmth and emotion from the too often cold and rational modern aesthetic. Despite his long career and the variety of materials he works in, JHQ's design signature is immediately recognizable. The sensibility that permeates his flatware, cookware, tableware, works in teak and rare woods, and cast iron all come out in the mills, making them the perfect starting off point for a study of his work.

The mills' sculptural forms and fine treatment of materials place them at the cusp of the Danish Modern movement. The Danish designers (along with a strong showing from the other Scandinavian countries) were able to take core ideas of Modernism and add an element of warmth through the use of form, democratic ideals, workmanship, and natural materials. The Danish ethos was one of functionalism, which meant that design evolved as human needs changed rather than through the influence of outside forces such as style and art movements. Begun in the pre-war era with a forward-looking desire to craft ergonomic goods as useful as they are beautiful, the movement blossomed after the war as a series of designers and architects took advantage of Denmark's strengths - natural materials, a focus on the home, and a strong network of workshops where craftsmanship was more valued than mass production. This led to a style that was a less dogmatic form of modernism - using soft edges and a more humanistic feel. The work was modern, but felt comfortable. Danish Modern found a special place between the austere lines of the Bauhaus tradition and the exuberant atomic look that held place at the ends of the design spectrum of the post-war era. This movement became the epitome of "good design" and remains influential to this day. IKEA's mission to outfit homes worldwide with well designed, high quality, and affordable goods is a direct descendant of this design philosophy.

It's easy to see how the mills sit within the overall context of Danish Design. For example, looking at the work of Finn Juhl. His hand crafted minimalist housewares met consumers' functional needs while having enough drama to appeal to their emotional needs. He led the Danes in taking advantage of the surplus of high quality teak that was a by-product of the war effort by sculpting it into beautiful and substantial furniture that introduced the use of abstract organic forms. Although JHQ's work is much more grounded and symmetrical than Juhl's, his influence was strong, and his influence can be seen in many of JHQ's mills.

To provide a framework for examining the major aspects of his design philosophy, I have broken down his design hallmarks into 5 areas; clean, substantial, natural, timeless, and high quality. These five qualities are by no mean exhaustive, but they can be applied to all of his work to a certain degree. I will focus on them as they apply to the mills.

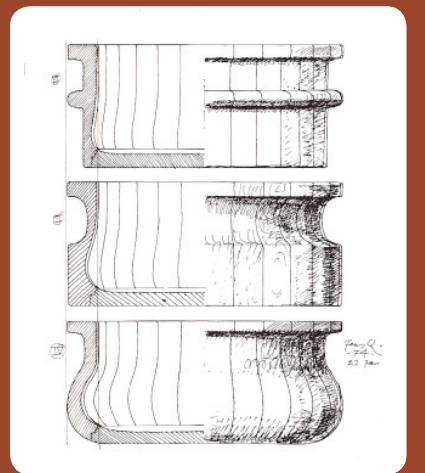
Clean

The most telling aspect that makes JHQ's design work thoroughly modern is the lack of adornment. With little exception, he doesn't fall prey to the desire to embellish pieces with decoration of any kind. The form of the piece and the materials themselves are the decoration, and he lets it speak for itself. Any decoration is created by the mating of two materials on the surface of the piece. Even the forms themselves are symmetrical, clean, and understated - incorporating subtle curves and angles. It is easy for a wood-turner to get overly audacious in the use of curves and variation along the length of the piece. JHQ's curves never distract from the basic form that is the mill. He prefers to let the surface variation of the wood speak for itself. As he said, "Simplicity ... is not the same as poorness."

In the mills this idea of simplicity is taken to another level by the clever integration of the mechanics of the salt shaker and pepper mill into the overall form. These are working mechanical devices that need to store both grains of salt and peppercorns, as well as house the grinder - all as part of a dynamic turning mechanism. With a few early exceptions, he was able to engineer clean forms that did not need exposed hardware, screws, or other visible mechanical elements.

Substantial

One might say that his design work is solid, heavy, or even "beefy". When you pick up one of his mills, it sits in your hand in a substantial way. The wood is heavy, and you have the distinct feeling that as a beautiful kitchen instrument, this would make an excellent blunt weapon. Although several designs have fine edges or thin areas, those elements are balanced by substantial forms that leads to an overall feel of solidity. Despite the "chunky"



JHQ's original drawings show how he used teak staves to create such amazing bowls.

design, the mills all sit comfortably in one's hand, proving that the overall ergonomics were considered along with all of the other considerations as part of the design process.

Timeless

Although it is clear that JHQ work represents archetypical Danish Modern design, one must acknowledge that his work hearkens back to other eras as strongly as they do the era to which they belong. His mills would be as much at home on the giant hand carved wooden table of a medieval castle as on the dinner table of the mid-century American housewife. This is no coincidence. JHQ stated "I was always interested in old Danish wagons and carts. Examining them was a fantastic way to learn about wood and old-fashioned craftsmanship." These primitive carts, as well as the hulls of Viking ships, serve as a source of both design and construction inspiration. The naturally finished wood, rough cast iron, polished brass, and unglazed porcelain are materials that have been used for centuries. There are also elements of the primitivist aesthetic that relate back to African, Japanese, and Oceanic art, both in the materials and the form of the early Dansk line. With JHQ "timeless" doesn't just refer to a few generations - where you could imagine his pieces in your parents' home - it means hundreds of years. You could imagine his work at King Arthur's round table or perhaps at some sort of ancient Micronesian ceremony.

Natural

Although JHQ's work follows a strict sense of symmetry, he is highly in tune with nature and the organic origin of the materials he uses. Time Magazine quoted him in 1975 as saying "I believe that as much of nature as possible should be brought into your nest. You should have as much around you as you can to remind you of good craftsmanship." His deep understanding of and connection with the natural world led to an almost spiritual understanding of materials and how best to use them. This connection with nature comes from his Danish heritage. The Danes have extolled their love of nature all

the way back to the time of the Vikings. JHQ spent as much time as possible at his seaside workshop, where he can be close to nature.

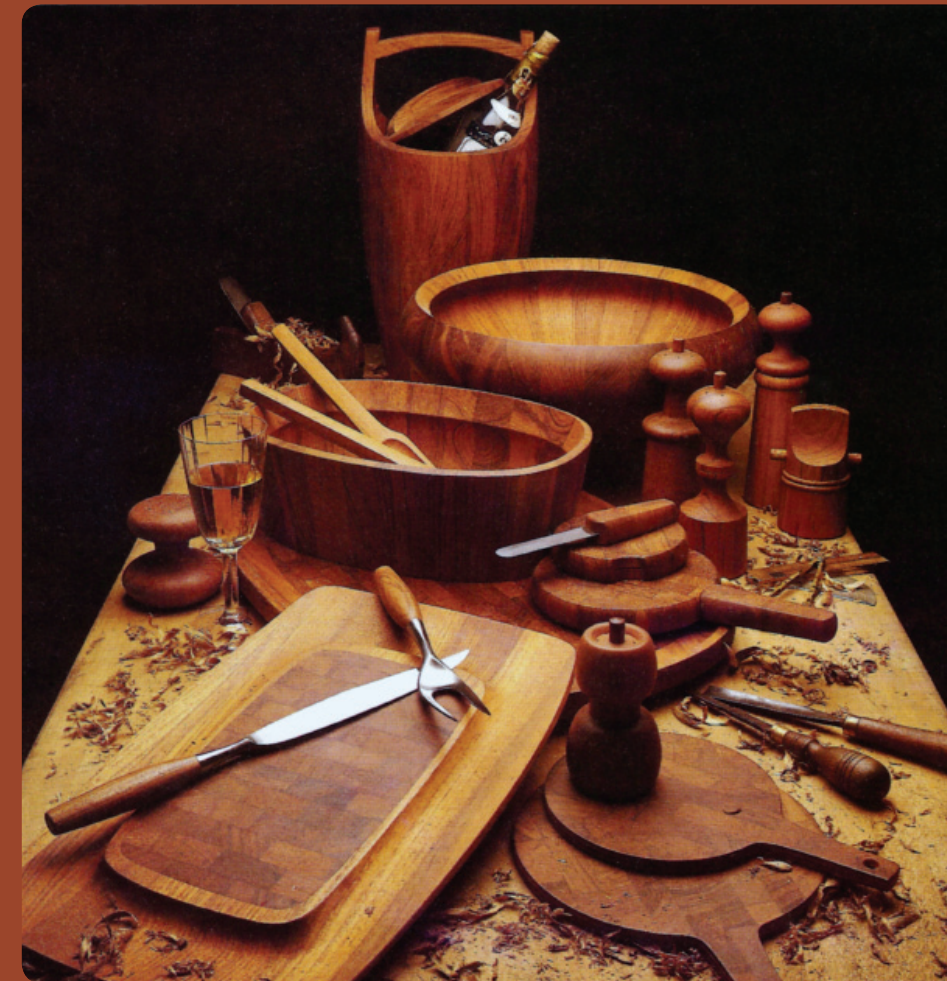
He said, "Be it clay or silver, the more a designer knows about his materials, the better he will understand what they can do for him." As such, he spent much time studying the raw materials that went into his creations, and his understanding was as much of the nature of the materials as of nature itself. It is evident from his success that he is able to truly take this understanding and use it to manifest a vision in three dimensions. His favorite material was wood, and much of his work started out as wood carvings, recreated in metal or other materials as appropriate. Although it was the trend, he eschewed plastic and other man-made materials so popular in his time for natural materials in their raw state - wood, metal, clay, and glass.

Quality

A strong focus on quality is an attribute that runs deep in the ethos of Dansk and JHQ. It permeates the company's philosophy in all areas of their output - including construction, materials, design, and marketing. If Dansk was unable to produce an item at a reasonable price, they chose to discontinue the item rather than produce a lesser quality version. As Dansk says, "...what really counts is not How Much but How Good. To see how good, pick up a piece. Turn it over. The back is as beautifully finished as the front." This total focus on quality is a big part of what made the company so successful. The IQ Designs site focuses on quality as its opening message to this day: "The bitterness of poor quality lasts much longer than the sweetness of low price."

The focus on high quality design is part of JHQ's Scandinavian heritage, which promotes the idea that objects should provide emotional comfort first and foremost. The quality infused in these items are manifested in a better life for the owner - not just a symbol of their wealth or status. By care-

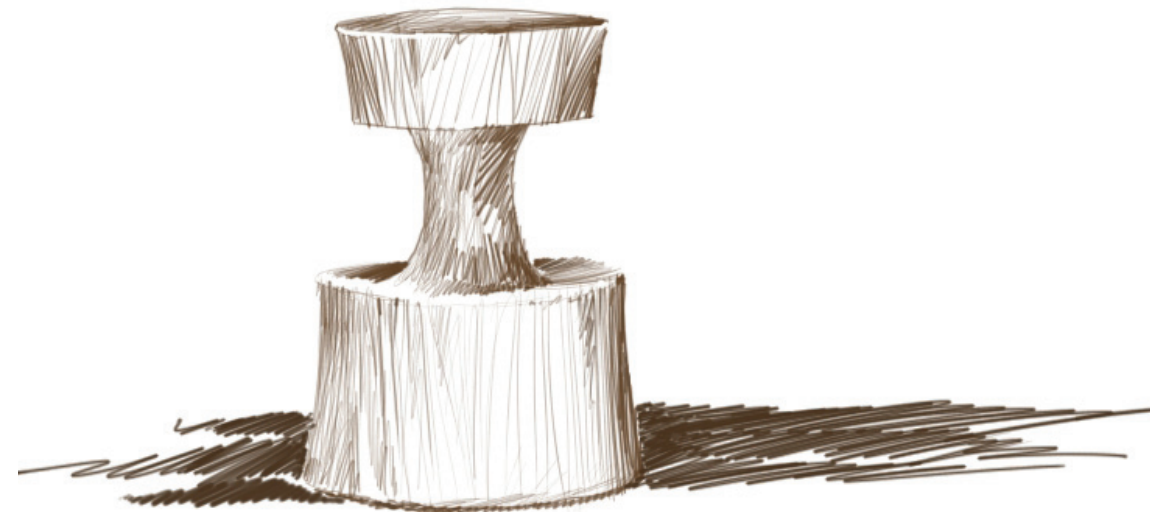
fully balancing the form, durability, cost and feel of the item and injecting a human quality it is possible to have a truly modern design that enriches lives through usefulness and artistry. The mills accomplish this goal as compact examples of useful art - beautiful to look and perfectly serving their purpose when time to perform.



The lines of JHQ's classic ice bucket evoke visions of the hulls of Viking ships and the pegged construction of medieval handiwork.



Prior to WWII, pepper mills in the US were utilitarian implements not well suited for the dining table.



The Early Mills

By the late 50s, the Dansk line had expanded to include Kobenstyle cookware, Variation V flatware, a handful of brass goods, and the beginning of the Staved Teak line - which included an ice bucket, his archetypical surfboard tray, and a few other pieces - all designed by JHQ. One of these teak pieces, which appeared in a 1958 ad in the New Yorker, was an innovative salt and pepper mill. Costing \$10.50 (\$65 in 2007 dollars), the piece was marketed by the (no longer in existence) upscale, modernist Fraser's furniture store of Berkeley, CA as an answer to the rhetorical question, "What can you do with salt and pepper?" Dansk was able to put them together with salt on top and pepper below, the mill was touted as "Easy to hold; easy to fill."

This was to be the first of many Dansk pepper mills to come. JHQ had come up with a new take on a common product and was able to incorporate into his overall vision of a coherent line of table top products. Although the line of mills began with this innovative all in one design, most of the early mills did not have a salt and pepper design - they were pepper mills. Some had matching salt shaker shakers, some did not.

WHAT

CAN YOU DO WITH SALT AND PEPPER?

DANSK put them together in one unique 9" teak cylinder — Salt shaker on top; pepper mill below. Easy to hold; easy to fill.

Postpaid
\$10.50



FRASER'S
Telegraph and Channing
Berkeley 4, California

Dansk's earliest pepper mill - this piece was in production as early as 1958, as evidenced by the New Yorker ad above. Fraser's was a high end modern furniture store in Berkeley, CA at the time.

This mill's construction sets it apart from later work. It is filled by unscrewing the top from the bottom with wooden threads, a detail unique to this design.



This is a rare and early version of one of the most popular designs. Its dimensions and construction are quite different than the more common later production models. It is much wider and a little taller, and the two pieces are divided at the bottom of the "neck". Examples with this shape have the oldest "bridge" type grinder.



This mill is featured as the only teak pepper mill in the 1962 Dansk catalog. It is only a pepper mill, with no integrated salt shaker.



This salt shaker is carved from end-grain rosewood, has a chrome shaker head, and a simple rubber stopper to fill with salt. This piece is unmarked and very rare.

This rare salt shaker pepper mill set in wenge is featured in the 1962 catalog as part of the Rare Woods series.

The inlay in each is evocative of the butterfly joint used by George Nakashima. There is a matching ice bucket, salad bowl, and trays in the wenge series, all highly sought after by collectors.



This pepper mill is made of teak and cane (bamboo), and was part of a limited series. The cane strips serve as decorative inlays in the carved teak. The bamboo cane strips tend to separate from the teak, which probably cause the demise of this line.

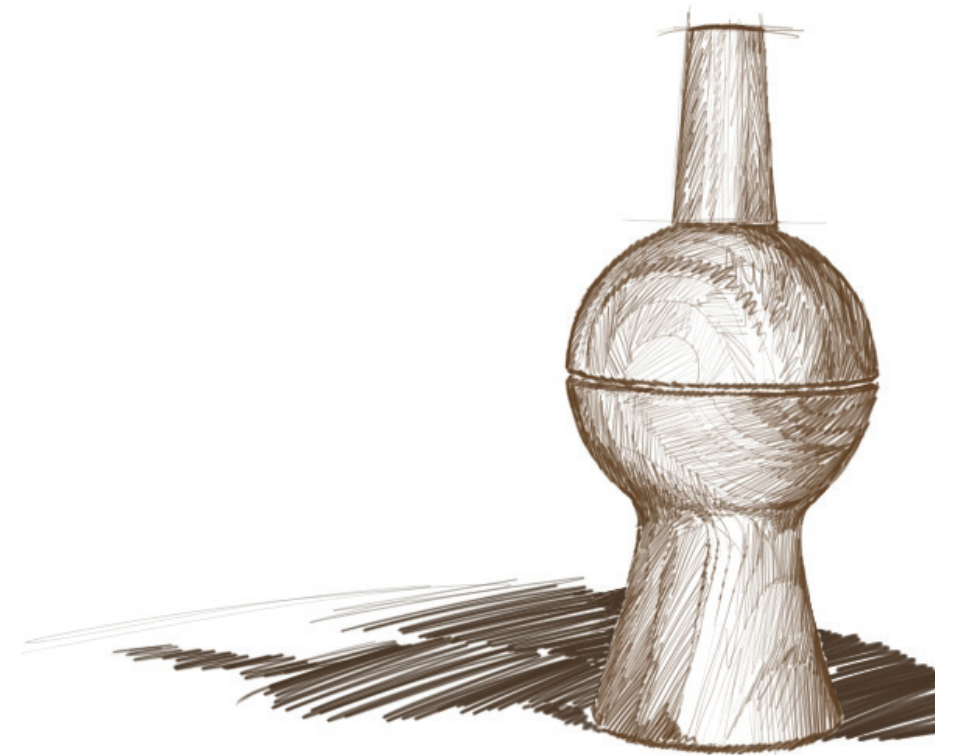
This mill is featured in a 1961 Dansk ad (as seen on p 13), priced at \$12.95 (\$95 in 2007 dollars)

This set has a variant in mutenye that was featured in the 1962 catalog. The mutenye version - part of the Rare Woods series - has a salt shaker equally as tall as the pepper mill. This set in teak with different sized pieces has exactly the same shape, and may have been produced afterwards.

The mill is 12 3/4" tall. As with the other tall mills, the photo is out of proportion with the other mills.



Although not technically part of the teak pepper collection, JHQ's Variations stainless and Flamestone stoneware salt and pepper shakers were part of the Dansk line during this era. The only other non-wood salt and peppers by JHQ were part of the Smooth Flamestone line, which debuted in 1964.



The 1960s

The sixties were the golden age of Danish modern. Popularity started growing in the late 50s, and by 1963 you couldn't open a home magazine without finding Scandinavian inspired pieces. Although its popularity waned towards the end, Dansk rode the entire decade with astounding success. The staved teak line was a huge part of this success, as the perfect accessory to complement the teak furniture which largely defined the style. Fjord flatware became ubiquitous in advertising and the iconic ice bucket was everywhere. The mills became a great way for Dansk to increase its line by providing products that were whimsical, artful, beautiful, and at the same time useful.

The 1964 "Meet" ad did an excellent job of telling the story of the mills. It painted a picture of Dansk researchers combing the world for the most beautiful and exotic woods and bringing them to JHQ - who was able to sculpt them into an array of shapes that bring these clever bits of table top engineering to the realm of high art. The text is accompanied by an amazing photo of mostly Rare Woods mills that display a gamut of shapes that evoke UFO's, traditional chess pieces, and exotic architecture while hinting at the tradi-



Meet Wenge, Mutenye, Coca Bola, Palisander, Pao Rosa, Siamese Teak. Then invite one to dinner and spice things up a bit.

Dansk summoned these exotic woods from the rainforests of the world to Jens Quistgaard's Danish studio. They make up this delegation of uncommon salt-and-peppers.

Quistgaard designed each piece as a complete table seasoner. The top holds salt. The lower half grinds up fresh peppercorns. Clever? Yes. But there's more to it than that.

The shapes here, as in Dansk's entire Top of the Table Collection, are sculptures in their own right. Designer Quistgaard selects his rare woods with an expert eye. Then he carves dozens of models, before deciding on the few to be reproduced.

Each must come up to the very special Dansk standard. Each must be fresh. Dignified. Audacious. Timeless. Satisfying to behold. And all this beauty must work. How?

Effortlessly. As do our pepper mill mechanisms. They're as extraordinary as the shapes. They're made in France especially for Dansk. The steel is so hard, and machined so accurately it can crack the toughest peppercorn to a gourmet's taste. Each mill is pre-set to a medium grind because that's how pepper tastes best. No re-adjustments, no chunks—just a smooth, even sprinkling of pungent grains. Such knowing places as Laperouse in Paris and La Cremaillere in Banksville, New York use them.

So treat yourself and your table to one of these unique seasoners. Soon you'll find you're giving them to your favorite people. They'll think you're the salt of the earth.

Note: Dansk's current Top of the Table Collection includes 493 uncommon designs. To see them, just write for a free catalog to: Dansk Designs, Dept. SP, Great Neck, N.Y.

DANSK
DANSK DESIGNS LTD

tional mill designs they evolved from. The quality of the grinder is also a huge selling point, and the fact that these are the perfect gift is a parting thought that was key to their marketing strategy.

While the ad touts the impressive variety of exotic woods available, Dansk's collection was mostly made out of teak due to the expense and rarity of the other woods mentioned. The line grew until it reached 20 mills. Around 1967, Dansk "whittled" down the line to 9 mills whose design had stood the test of time. The mills (including the rare woods) retailed for the not insignificant price of \$15.95 (\$100 in 2007 dollars) from around 1964 through the end of the decade.



The popular mushroom shape's original form was created in palisander rosewood. The very hard wood allowed for a silky smooth finish. It came in two variants. This one, which has a flat plastic "screw" in the top to fill with salt, and another with a hidden filling mechanism under the removable "mushroom cap" top.



This is another very rare, early design in teak. It is quite dramatic in shape and size, standing 12" tall. One fills the salt through a small plastic screw in the top.



Another perennial favorite in the line, this mill is seen in all eras of production. The earlier versions are carved out of end-grain (butcher block) teak and later versions out of solid wood.

The loop at the top of this popular design is ergonomic until the salt falls through it.





This common mill came in another rare version that was taller and had two rings in the middle. At 8 1/2" tall, this mill serves to define scale throughout the Dansk mill photos, except where noted.

This is the shortest mill JHQ designed. It has an unusual filling mechanism. There are toothed gears in the middle of the mill that allows the two halves to separate. These are often seen with broken gear teeth, so I assume this tendency to break led to a limited run, and thus their rarity.



The simple shape made this mill a favorite that stayed part of the line for years.





Although it is an evolution from the early mushroom mill on p. 33, the plug top version is so ubiquitous it deserves its own place.



This design is a favorite, its cross shaped top is often compared to the king in a chess set.

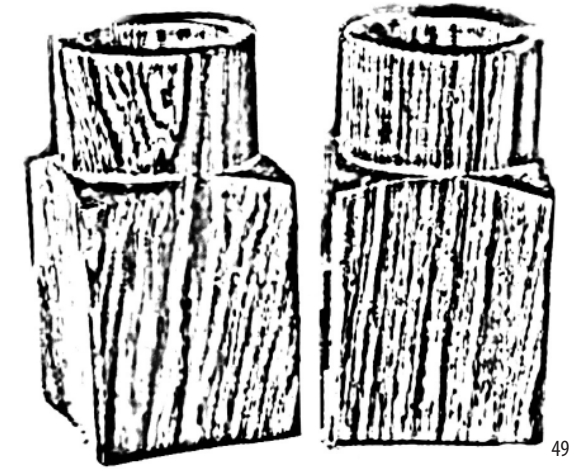
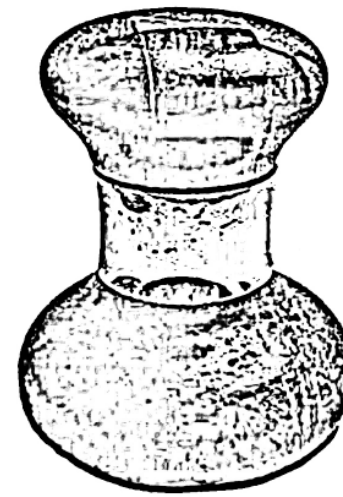
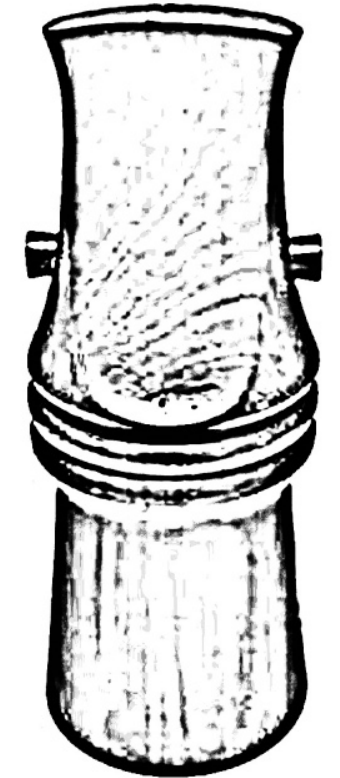
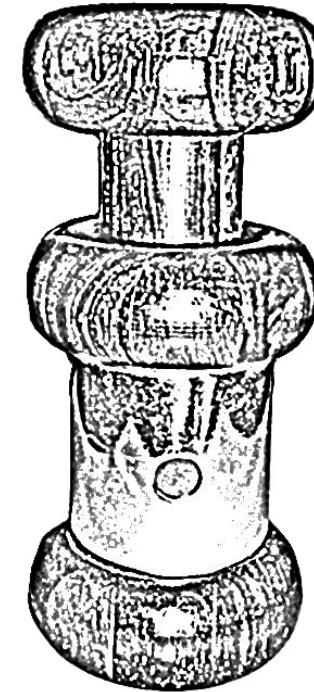
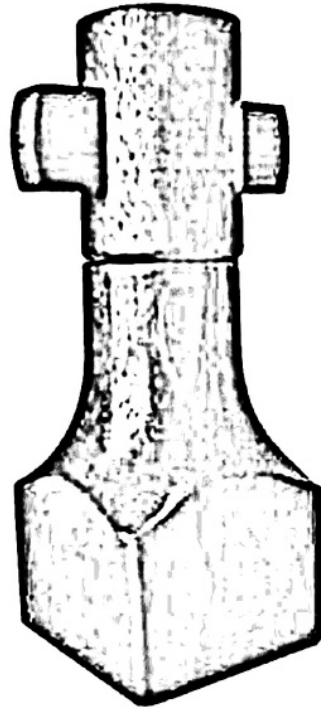
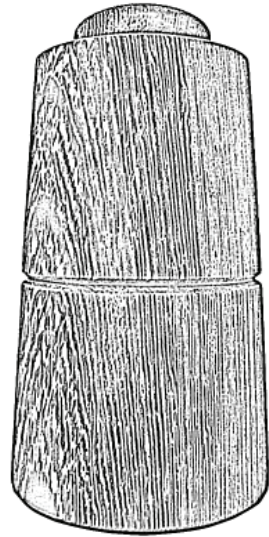
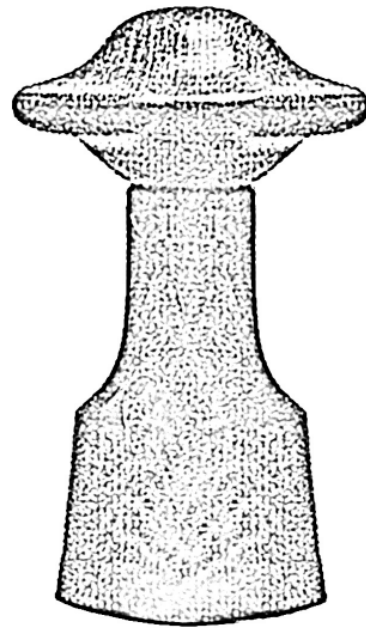
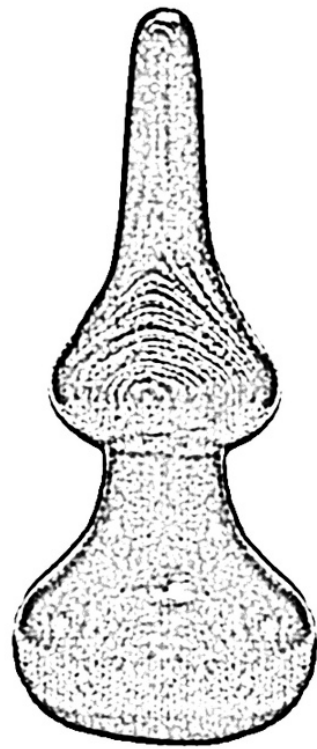
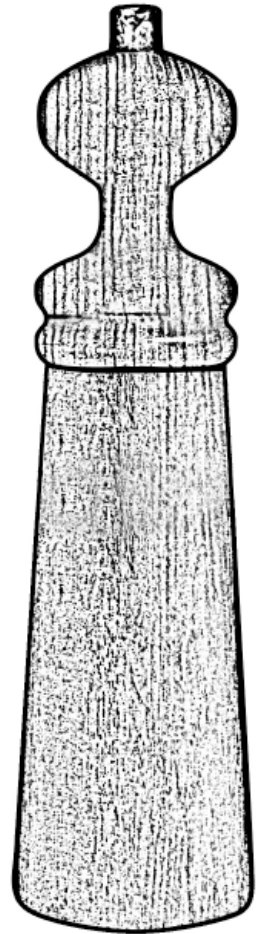


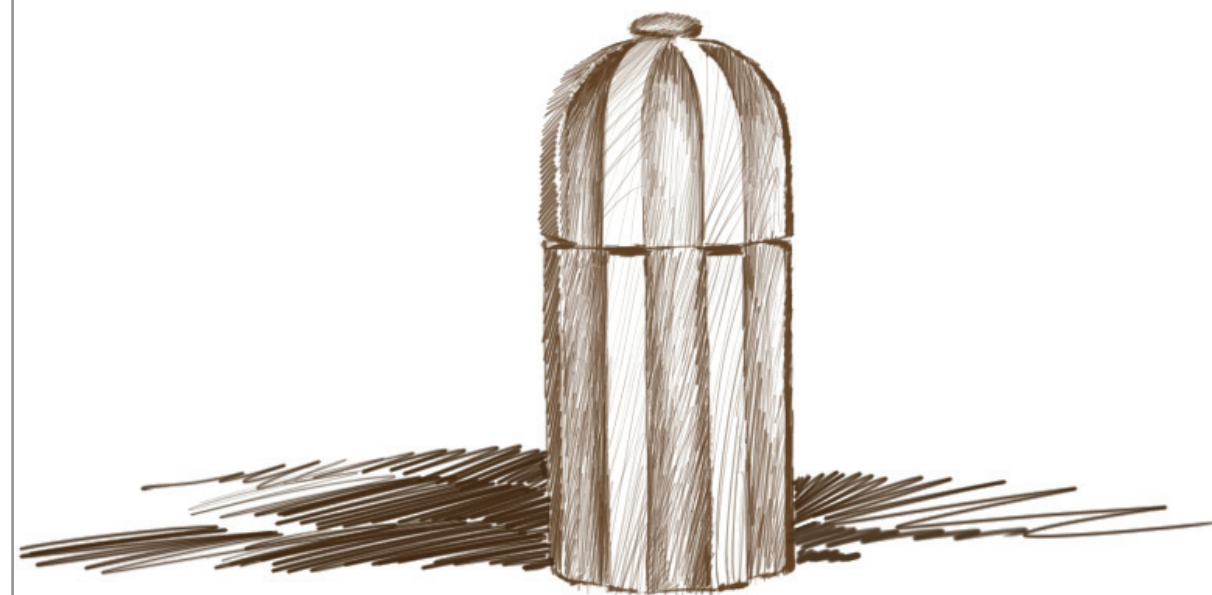
If the mill to the left is a king, this is the pawn.

Some rare pieces not photographed.

This page. These are five rare mills from the mid 1960s. The four at right appear in the 1964 ad.

Opposite. The four rare mills on the left are made of palisander and chrome metal. To fill with pepper, you turn the chrome band until a hole in the metal meets a hole in the wood. Upper and lower right are palisander rosewood salt and peppers from the Rare Woods series.





The 1970s and 1980s

Although by the end of the 60s America's tastes were moving away from Danish modern, the style was by no means dead. Many of JHQ's classic items were slowly phased out of the Dansk line in favor of their expanding tableware and glassware collections. Part of the reason for this was the cost of materials and construction. Teak was harder to get, and it was getting hard for Dansk to continue to produce their high quality items to the specs required in the face of the new competition by international manufacturers flooding the market with cheap housewares - many of them knockoffs of Dansk's earlier works. Specific numbers are hard to come by, but the discontinuing of the Fjord line in 1984 was the culmination of this trend. Costs had risen to \$100 a place setting (\$200 in 2007 dollars), and at those prices even a classic has a hard time competing.

In spite of these challenges, production of the mills continued through the 70s and 80s as a stalwart of JHQ's design output. The line actually grew through the early 70s with several new designs, and continued to evolve through the era. The mills of this era are the most common and easy to find. However, by the late 80s the old growth teak was impossible to get, and the new owners of Dansk kept only a few items in the teak line. By the time the Dansk stores closed in 2004, there was only one or two designs in production.

This is a rare, highly tapered hourglass shape. It feels much less fragile than it looks.



A rare mill shaped like an apple core.





This rare fluted bullet mill is a very elaborate design.



The squared off base and acorn shaped head of this rare piece is quite distinctive.

This unique mill is about the size and shape of a softball.



From the collection of Robert Chipman.



From the collection of Robert Chipman.



From the collection of Robert Chipman.









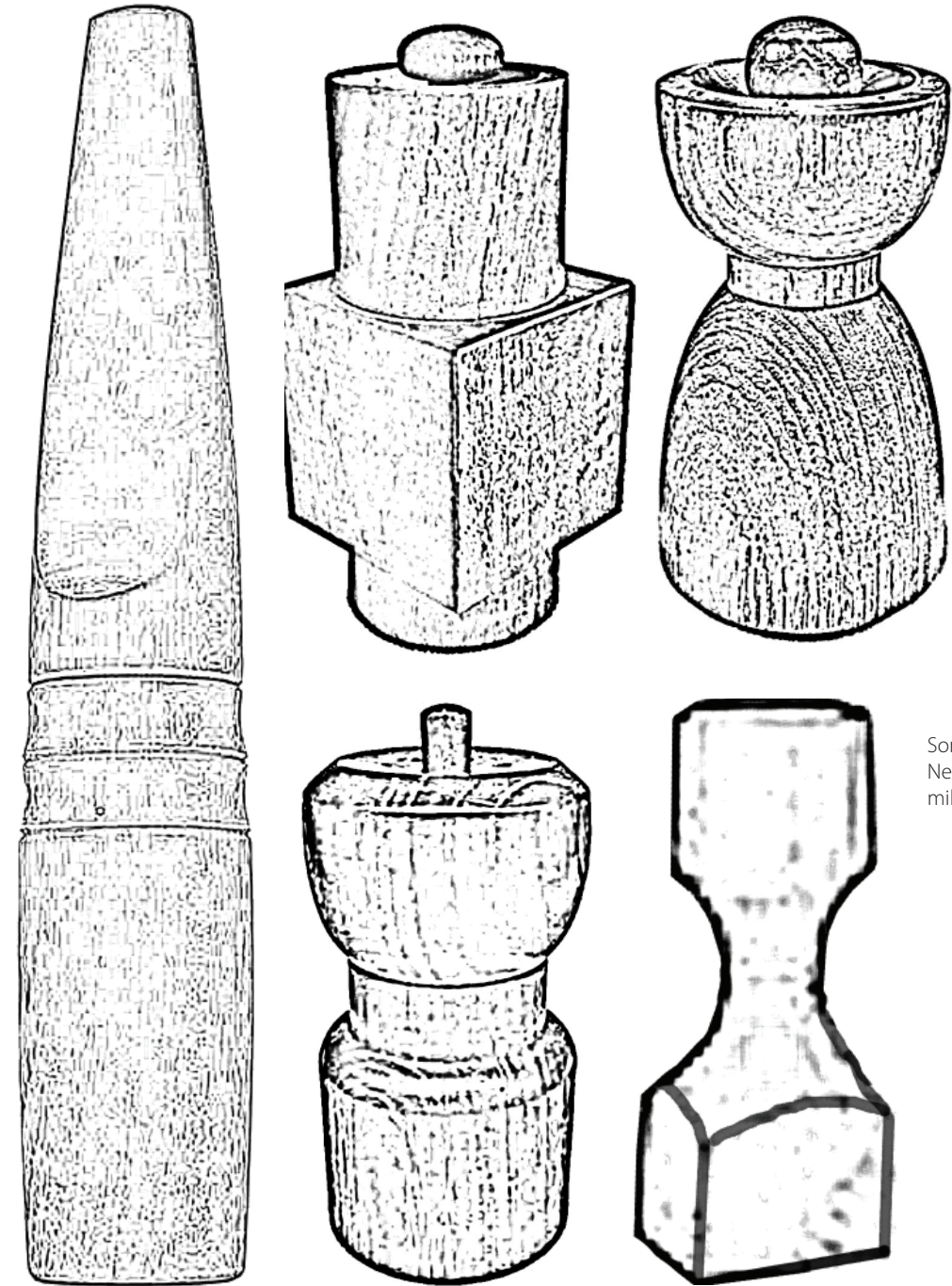
Two mills that show off square forms.





This staved set of salt and pepper shakers are later Malaysian productions.

These later production mills are the tallest in the collection. The 16 1/2" one on the left is just a pepper mill, and makes an impressive statement. The one on the right is 12 3/4", and includes an integrated salt shaker.



Some rare pieces not photographed. Next to a 14" tall later example are four mills from the mid-70s line.



Other Designers

Although Jens Quistgaard's line for Dansk was the first and by far the most popular line in the Danish Modern housewares market, there were a number of other designers & companies both in and outside of Denmark making teak pepper mills and other related accessories. They run the gamut from high quality mills with world class designs to cheap knockoffs made of low grade teak and other woods.

I am including these other mills primarily to show the enormous influence JHQ had on this segment of the design world. His mills were emulated and knocked off because they were so successful, and the market was clearly strong enough to support these other designer's efforts. Secondly, collectors need to be able to correctly identify the mills they see while shopping. There is a lot of misinformation out there, and having a full picture of the range of Danish mills available will lead to a better educated marketplace. Collectors may also want to expand the reach of their collections, and these mills are a great place to start.

Gunnar Cyren for Dansk

As Dansk branched out and started working with other designers, the Lunning Prize winning Swede Gunnar Cyren came into the fold after leaving his position as artistic director of the venerable Orrefors Glassworks. Starting in 1970, he designed many popular products for Dansk, including several flatware patterns, collectible silver animal figures, and an extensive collection of quintessentially 70s style colorful plastic tableware - similar to Vigenelli's work for Heller.

During his 4 year stint with Dansk he contributed to their salt and pepper line with a series of very nice matching sets of teak salt shakers and pepper mills. They are very high quality, with simple, more traditional designs. All of his teak pieces were separate salt and peppers. He also produced a few combo salt and peppers in plastic. His teak grinders used the same plastic ring Peugeot mechanism as the JHQ mills, marked GC.

Nissen

If there is a rival in quality and collectibility to Dansk, it would have to be Nissen. Richard Nissen was a designer and manufacturer who produced furniture (some designed by JHQ himself) and numerous housewares similar in style to Dansk. This was no coincidence, as his Langaa factory manufactured teak products for Dansk. After a long and successful history, Nissen was acquired by the like-minded Danish company Bodum in 1991, who kept most of the original staff. They still make several products from the original Nissen line, using beech wood rather than teak.

Nissen produced over 30 mills, and they are becoming quite collectible. Later productions are better marked than earlier mills. For a while, Nissen used the same all metal Peugeot mechanisms as Dansk. One hallmark that can set Nissen mills apart is the use of red plastic plugs, which are found on many of their mills. A prominent design element Nissen used was a distinctive cast iron circular handle that turned the mill. In

1972, Nissen was granted a patent for a new design of pepper mill mechanism with three innovative features. The new grinder design - manufactured by Peugeot - allowed filling through a hole integrated into the middle of the grinder itself. What this meant was that there was no need for a filling hole that could visually interrupt the design of the mill. Second, he was able to enclose the pepper in a transparent plastic compartment - also integrated with the grinder. Although the plastic tends to get cloudy with age, it allowed for "cut-outs" in the wood that allowed the peppercorn level to be easily seen from the outside. Finally, the mill allowed for the user to adjust the coarseness of the grind by pressing down while turning - applying more pressure to the top of the mill engaged a spring which separated the grinding mechanism allowing larger pieces of pepper to fall through.

Digsmed

Flemming Digsmed is another contemporary designer of JHQ who produced products in this field. Famous for his circular spoked spice rack, Digsmed produced dozens of bowls, trays, and other items in teak - including salt shakers and pepper mills. Digsmed pieces are top quality, especially their butcher block teak cutting and serving boards. Digsmed also worked with the Nissen factory, and many of their products are very similar. Many Digsmed pieces are inscribed copyright 1964, marking their place at the apex of Danish Modern movement in the US.

Lauffer

Another contemporary of Dansk, the Lauffer company produced goods by a number of designers throughout Europe, mostly famous for their high quality modern design flatware. They came out with a line of teak mills with the trademarked name of "Shakermill" designed by Dan Droz in 1975 which feature Peugeot mechanisms. These mills are clearly marked, and the signature mushroom shaped stoppers are impossible to miss, especially when they stick out the side of the mill as on many designs.

Copco

Copco is an American company that started in 1960 with a line of enamel coated cast iron cookware designed by New York designer Michael Lax. Produced in Denmark, these colorful high quality pieces took some design cues from Dansk's Kobenstyle, but they were more like Le Creuset in construction. Lax also designed a handful of salt and pepper shakers in dark wood, produced in Italy. Some of his mills take more than a few cues from JHQ's mills. Copco is still around today, primarily focused on tea kettles. Lax designed for Dansk as well, producing glassware in the mid 80s.

Other Danish Makers

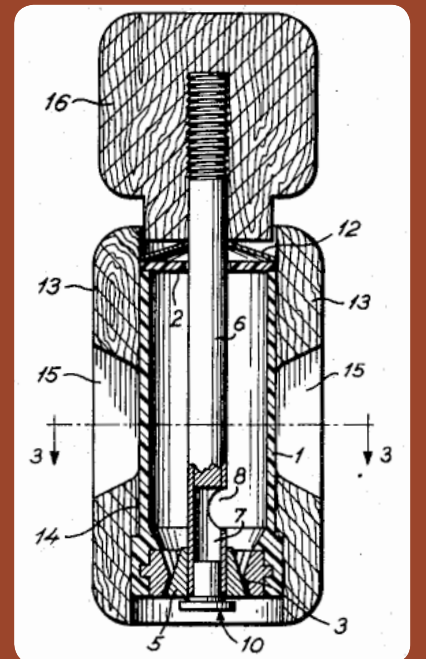
During this era, Danish housewares and furniture companies made just about anything and everything out of teak, and pepper mills were no exception. High style firms such as Laurids Lonborg and Illums Bolighus produced a variety of housewares and furniture in the era. There were also many other producers in Denmark including Scanform, Holline, Skjode Skjern, and Woodline. Some were well designed lines with pieces that could stand up to Dansk in terms of quality, while many were simply knockoffs, taking advantage of the trend by using low quality teak, generic grinders, and derivative designs.

One area of Danish design that became very popular was the teak animal sculptures by Kay Bojesen and those that followed in his footsteps. The genre included everything from beautiful animal shaped sculptures to funny little trolls that doubled as bottle openers. You can find numerous housewares of this ilk, and salt and pepper did not miss this whimsical treatment.

Asian Production

As teak mills gained in popularity, housewares manufacturers around the world were commissioning knockoffs from Asia. Some of the nicest were from Japanese manufacturers. You can find many quality Japanese teak items from the 60s - particularly the laminated trays. But most mills came from the source of the teak - South East Asia.

As Dansk and other companies moved their manufacturing there to save on shipping and labor costs, the local manufacturers went into business for themselves on the side. They made salad sets, trays and pepper mills, which were usually crude simplifications of JHQ's designs or traditional pepper mill shapes. They used locally produced grinder mechanisms of questionable quality. Some of these mills are quite nice, while some are no more than crude carvings with a simple "Teak from Thailand" sticker on them.



An illustration from Richard Nissen's 1972 patent grant for a pepper mill mechanism that you can fill through an opening in the middle of the grinder. The photo shows an example. Note how the red plug is right in the middle of the grinder mechanism.



Three examples of work by Gunnar Cyren for Dansk. At left are two salt and pepper sets in teak. At right is a combination salt and pepper in clear plastic that was part of a line that had an entire matching serving set.



Four works by Richard Nissen that represent some of the major themes in his work. From left to right: A pepper mill with an interesting inlay in contrasting wood (note how the inlay continues on the top); An early combination mill; The exact model shown in Nissen's patent application for his custom grinding mechanism; An example with the circular iron handle.



These pages show some of Fleming Digsméd's work. The salt and pepper shaker set feature an early Digsméd logo (above). Later pieces are marked with a Viking icon and a 1964 copyright.



Some examples of Danish teak salt and peppers. The four mills at left are not the highest quality and feature a similar grinder, marked Made in Denmark. The small shakers cover a range of shapes, including the whimsical fish.

The duck sculpture is by Skjode Skjern.



Opposite. More Danish teak salt and peppers. These teak mills are all from different makers, but bear more than a passing resemblance to JHQ's work for Dansk. The shaker at right is unmarked, and the plugs in the side are for effect only, as it is filled through a hole in the bottom.

The pepper mill and salt shaker on this page are by Skjode Skjern. The grinder crushes the pepper corns against an actual stone, making this a very unique design.



This page. Pepper mill designed by Danish ceramicist Birgit Krogh in 1979 as part of her series of teak housewares for Woodline. There is also a matching salt grinder.

Opposite. A "Shakermill" featuring a Peugeot grinder alongside a rare mortar and pestle. Both designed by Dan Droz for Lauffer.



This page. Salt shaker and pepper grinder by Tre Spade of Italy, who also provided grinder mechanisms to Dansk. These pieces are of very richly grained teak.

Opposite. Made in Italy, these pieces are designed by Michael Lax for Copco. Wood type is unknown.



This page. A bona-fide knock off sits in front of the genuine article. Crudely made of cheap wood stained to look like teak, this mill's imitation proves the iconic stature of JHQ's design through flattery.

Opposite. Three pieces of Thai origin. The salt shaker in the middle is typical of the cheap, derivative works you see in thrift stores today. The grinders are of decent quality, with shapes indisputably "inspired" by JHQ.

Collecting



A curiosity for the collector. The plug in the top of this mill is unique, leading to the question: is it a genuine rare variation of the mill on p. ___ or a handcrafted replacement for a missing top, created by an artful previous owner. Also, note the tight crack in the lower portion of the mill.

Even if pepper makes you sneeze, teak pepper mills are a perfect collectible. They are small, relatively easy to find, and have a wide range in price. You can start a collection with some of the more common mills that start in the \$30 range. As your collection matures, you will need to invest more to fill the holes in your collection, sometimes upwards of \$300 for the rarest pieces. Dansk did collectors a huge favor by marking just about all of their pieces with designer and country of origin - which helps beginning collectors find authentic pieces and reinforces values in the marketplace.

Dansk has been around since the 50s, and has always had a good reputation. Although it has been priced in the mid-range bracket in recent years, back in the day Dansk was quite expensive, and their pieces retain value. Even without the desire to collect them all, the mills serve well as a high quality, beautiful table seasoner, and one should not be shy about using them.

Value

The book does not include values because they can vary greatly and become outdated quickly. The major factors impacting value are rarity, vintage, and condition. Pieces from the Rare Woods series are highly sought after and they are as rare as the woods they are made from. One way to look at value is that they are made of high quality wood that is no longer available with the highest quality grinders, and then take their beauty, age, and condition into account.

Condition

Because most of the mills one finds were used for their intended purpose by the original owner, they have withstood years of use, and their condition can vary greatly. The good news is that regular usage does not ruin the value of quality wood household items. In fact, years of handling can actually add patina to the wood and increase the piece's beauty. There are some common issues that it is worth looking out for, however. Many pieces you see are covered in kitchen grime, which can be hard to remove. The grinders can become loose, plugs can go missing, there can be corrosion on the metal or sometimes the wood, and the wood can split. The wood plugs tend to expand with time, making them hard to remove - thus damage from pliers is common. Alone, most of the issues can be overlooked, but many of them together will detract from a mill as both a useful and collectible piece.

Care and Use

Caring for the mills is very easy. All you need to do is give them an occasional rub with mineral oil. This serves to restore the natural oil in the wood, add to the patina, create a thin protective coating, and remove any surface dust. Although other products such as teak oil and linseed oil will give you an excellent finish, they are not food safe. Some mills will need more extensive care and potentially restoration. I would caution that misguided attempts to clean and repair can make them worse off - for example using hot water to clean them - so it is best to leave this work to an expert.

Many are confused with how to use the mills, as they don't come apart for filling like the typical pepper mill. Filling them simply involves figuring out where the plugs are and filling with salt and peppercorns. The simple paper insert that came with the mills (in the early 70s) explains it best:

DANSK INVITES YOU TO SPICE THINGS UP A BIT!

Your Staved Teak Peppermill-Salt Shaker is a complete table seasoner.

The top holds salt. The lower half grinds up fresh peppercorns.

Here's how it works: to pour the salt in, gently remove one of the teak pegs (or the teak disc) on the upper part of your Peppermill-Salt Shaker. When it's full, replace the teak peg or the teak disc.

To insert the peppercorns turn your mill upside down and turn the black nylon disc. Or, if your mill is fitted with teak pegs on the lower part, remove one of the pegs. Turn the disc to closed position or replace the peg, when you are finished.

To keep your mill lustrous give it an occasional beauty rub with ordinary mineral oil.

You may soon find you're giving this unique Dansk seasoner to your favorite people. They'll think you're the salt of the earth!

If you have a collection, I would love to hear about it and use any information or images you want to share in a future version of this book. Don't hesitate to contact me via e-mail: mark@teakpepper.com.

Oh - and please don't outbid me on eBay!



A good example of how easily the teak pegs can get damaged by intrepid attempts to remove them by force.

Identifying Vintage

This book is organized around the time period a design first appeared. Because Dansk was so good about marking their products, identification is somewhat easy. Many mills' life spanned several decades, and thus the same design can be found with more than one grinder.

The Early Mills

For the purpose of the book, mills produced from the late 50s through 1963 are classified as the Early Mills. Mills in this category use the metal Peugeot "bridge" grinder mechanism, held in place by two screws or the more common all metal "flat" Peugeot grinder mechanism. The Peugeot logo on both early versions of the grinder is written in fancy script lettering. All of these mills are stamped "Danmark" (the Danish name for Denmark) into the wood on the bottom.



The 1960s

The mills of period between 1963 and the early 70's all used the all metal "flat" Peugeot grinder mechanism, with no black plastic ring around it and the Peugeot logo in block letters. They are marked by stamps in the wood. Although the marks can be hard to read, they are always there. Several marks were used. The earliest is "Denmark JHQ". Then came various stamps with different variations on "Dansk Designs Ltd Denmark JHQ". Those with a keen eye will notice that some mills of this era have a misspelling in the mark: "Desings".



The '70s and '80s

During this era, the mills evolved quite a bit and the grinder mechanisms went through several changes. In the early 70s, Dansk changed the grinder design. The new design incorporated a rotating double plastic ring around the grinder. In some ways this clever mechanism was an improvement over the old design, as it made the bottom of the mill cleaner in design, and eliminated lost plastic plugs. One fills the mill by spinning the outer plastic ring until the opening aligns with a hole in the inner ring.

The first version of this new mechanism used the same all metal Peugeot grinder used earlier. These are clearly marked "Dansk Designs Ltd Denmark JHQ" in the plastic.



At some point, Dansk stopped working with Peugeot and moved to a mechanism with a similar double ring filling mechanism and a plastic grinder. The markings remained the same on these mills. One advantage to using a plastic grinder is that it doesn't corrode like metal, and thus the plastic grinders are often in overall better shape than the earlier, metal grinders. However, the plastic teeth wear quicker than metal and the whole mechanism tends to fall apart easier.



In the late 70s, Dansk eventually moved the production of the mills to Thailand. This made sense, as it was the primary source of the teak wood and the savings in labor and freight must have been enormous. The grinder used in the Thai mills retained the double ring, but used several different unbranded metal mechanisms. These mills are marked "Dansk Designs Ltd Thailand JHQ". Later grinders marked "Dansk International Designs Ltd Thailand JHQ" and "Dansk International Designs Ltd Malaysia JHQ" on the double plastic ring and once again feature plastic grinders.



Design Variations

Several of the JHQ's mills have had a very long lifespan, in fact two of the earliest mills were produced over a 20 year period. As time went on however, the shape and dimensions of the mills evolved from their original design formed by JHQ's hand. The most dramatic changes are seen in the switch to the Thai manufacturing facilities. The designs tended to get distorted in one way or another - and usually for the worse.

Below are two examples of this shift - the older mills are to the left in each example.



The newer mill on the right is larger overall than the original. The top is much chunkier and out of proportion with the same sized base as the original.



The Thai mill on the right is smaller and feels less substantial than the Danish production on the left. Also note the lighter wood in the newer mill.

The classic mushroom is one of Quistgaard's most popular designs. It was around for pretty much the entire history of the mills. This is a collection of five mills showing its evolution from the earliest to latest. At far left is an early version, created in Palisander. It has a plastic slotted screw in the top for filling. There was also another version of this palisander mill which is missing from this lineup, filled by removing the top with a slotted internal mechanism. Next is one from later in the 60s with an all metal grinder and a solid wood plug in the top. Next comes an early 70s version with a metal grinder and plastic ring, followed by a later model with an all plastic mechanism. The top is getting a little smaller in diameter in this version. The final example is from the 80s. The top and bottom diameter is noticeably smaller, the wood lighter and more streaky, and many aspects of the overall shape are less refined.



Acknowledgments

I'd like to thank Mae and Sacha Perlson for supporting

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