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LA OPALA IS OPAL GLASS AN INDIAN TABLEWARE: IT'S WHITE, NON-TRANSPARENT LOOK FROM ADDED MINERALS, CREATING A STRONG & ELEGANT DINNERWARE

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ABSTRACT

La Opala, an Indian tableware brand, originated in India in 1987, pioneered by Sushil Jhunjhunwala, who introduced opal glass to the Indian market, initially manufacturing in a small plant in Madhupur, Jharkhand, with technical help from Hosan Glass. The company grew by creating innovative, branded, and affordable opalware, becoming a market leader in elegant yet durable dinnerware and later expanding into crystal glassware. **Founder:** Sushil Jhunjhunwala had the vision to bring opal glass tableware to Indian homes, a novel concept in the late 1980s. **First Factory:** The first manufacturing facility was set up in Madhupur, Jharkhand, around 1988, marking the beginning of opal glass production in India. **Technical Partnership:** Hosan Glass from South Korea provided crucial technical assistance for the initial setup. **Innovation:** La Opala revolutionized the market by introducing proper branding, packaging, and marketing, making sophisticated tableware accessible and popular. **Expansion:** Success led to a second plant in Uttarakhand and the launch of Solitaire Crystal in 1996, diversifying their product range. In essence, La Opala's origin is rooted in an Indian entrepreneurial vision to create quality, stylish, and durable dinnerware, leveraging international technology to build a dominant local brand.

KEYWORDS: opal glass, tableware

History: La Opala, the leading Indian tableware brand, was founded by Mr. Sushil Jhunjhunwala, who serves as the Chairman and driving force behind the company's success

in pioneering opal glass in India since 1987. The company, La Opala RG Ltd., is a family-led business, with his son Ajit Jhunjhunwala as Managing Director, continuing the legacy of innovation in glassware.



Figure 1: La Opala leading heads.

Sushil Jhunjhunwala: Founder, Chairman, and visionary behind La Opala's entry into the Indian market.

Ajit Jhunjhunwala: Managing Director, leading the company's growth and expansion.

Nidhi Jhunjhunwala: Executive Director, involved in the company's operations.

Opal ware is primarily toughened glass, known for its opaque, milky-white look, made by adding opacifiers to molten glass, making it stronger, heat-resistant, and chip-resistant than regular glass, though some products might use plastic or similar materials, so always check labels for 'opal glass' or 'opal ware' to confirm its glass nature.

Material: It's a type of glass (opal glass) that gets its white, non-transparent look from added minerals, creating a strong, elegant dinnerware. Primarily made from opal glass, a strong, opaque glass material, and also uses borosilicate glass for cookware.

Durability: It's processed (often using thermal methods like tempering) to be much tougher, resisting chips, scratches, and temperature changes better than traditional glass.

Features: Usually microwave-safe, dishwasher-safe, lightweight, and sometimes described as "bone-ash free" for vegetarian use.

While most quality opal ware is glass, some cheaper or specialized items might use plastic or "vitro porcelain," so it's always best to check product descriptions for "toughened glass" or "opal glass".

Opal ware is generally considered very safe and healthy for food use because it's made from glass, is non-porous, doesn't leach chemicals, resists bacteria, and is bone ash-free (vegetarian), making it hygienic, durable, microwave/dishwasher safe, and a great alternative to ceramics or plastics.

- Non-Porous & Hygienic: Its glass composition prevents bacteria absorption and makes it easy to clean, unlike porous materials.
- Chemical-Free: It won't leach harmful chemicals into your food, even with heat.
- Bone Ash Free: It's 100% vegetarian, a significant benefit over bone china.
- Microwave & Dishwasher Safe: Convenient for daily use, it withstands heat and cleaning cycles without damage or fading.
- Durable & Scratch-Resistant: Resists chips, scratches, and stains, keeping your food uncontaminated.
- Better than Ceramic: Generally safer and more durable than traditional ceramic, which can contain heavy metals and may chip more easily.
- Safer than Plastic/Melamine: It's a non-reactive alternative, unlike some plastics that can leach chemicals. Opal glass (Opal ware) is generally considered microwave safe, durable, and ideal for reheating food because it's designed to resist heat, chips, and stains, and it doesn't leach chemicals, making it a popular, safe, and lighter alternative to ceramic or porcelain for everyday use. Just avoid extreme temperature shifts (like hot to cold quickly) or placing it directly on flames.



Figure-2: La Opala Crockeries & Logo

Key Benefits:

Microwave Safe: Perfect for heating and reheating meals.

Durable: Resists chipping, scratching, and breaking compared to heavier ceramic.

Lightweight: Easier to handle than traditional dinnerware.

Hygienic: Non-porous and doesn't absorb odours or bacteria.

Vegetarian-Friendly: Unlike bone china, it's a 100% vegetarian product.

Opal ware is a type of ceramic material that is produced by La Opala, an Indian manufacturer. It is made from fired clay mixed with crushed opal, giving it an eye-catching and distinct iridescent shine. Opal ware is highly heat-resistant, making it ideal for use in cooking and dining. It is made of non-porous glass that ensures there are no stains and odour absorbed. Opal ware is made from opal glass, a type of toughened, tempered glass created from a molten mix of silica and other minerals, processed with German technology to make it exceptionally strong, chip-resistant, and lightweight, resulting in its signature opaque white finish. This material offers superior durability, scratch resistance, and heat tolerance compared to traditional ceramics, making it ideal for everyday use in dishwashers.



Figure 3: La Opala Dinner Set.

Base Material: Silica (sand) mixed with other materials like potassium nitrate.

Manufacturing: A thermal process, often involving German technology, toughens the glass.

Resulting Properties: Opaque, non-porous, lightweight, heat-resistant, and much stronger than regular glass.

Durability: Resistant to chips, cracks, and scratches, making it great for daily use.

Hygiene: Non-porous surface means it doesn't absorb stains or odours easily.

Convenience: Dishwasher safe and easy to clean.

Aesthetics: Sleek, elegant look that's perfect for both casual and formal dining.

When to Be Cautious:

Thermal Shock: Avoid sudden, drastic temperature changes (e.g., putting a frozen opal plate directly in a hot microwave).

Direct Flame: Never use it on a stovetop or under a direct flame. So, for everyday reheating, opal glass is a great, safe choice for your kitchen.

Opal ware is a type of toughened, opaque glass, making it much stronger, chip-resistant, and lighter than regular transparent glass, while also being microwave/dishwasher safe and non-porous, perfect for everyday use; regular glass is transparent and more fragile but versatile, whereas opalware's key advantages are its superior durability and easy maintenance.

Opal ware (Opal Glass)

Material: Toughened glass infused with minerals, creating an opaque, milky-white appearance.

Durability: Highly chip, scratch, and break-resistant (up to 3x stronger than regular glass), great for daily use.

Weight: Lightweight, making it easy to handle and stack.

Features: Microwave & dishwasher safe, non-porous (doesn't absorb stains/odours), heat resistant, food safe, and pattern designs last.

Best For: Everyday meals, busy households needing low-maintenance, durable, and stylish dinnerware.

Regular Glass (Soda-Lime Glass)

Material: Transparent or translucent glass, often lighter and more delicate.

Durability: Prone to chipping, scratching, and breaking compared to opal ware.

Weight: Varies, but can be lighter than ceramic, though heavier than some opal ware.

Features: Can be used in microwaves (check specifics), but patterns might fade, and it's less robust for daily knocks.

Best For: Beverages, decorative items, or when transparency is desired; less ideal for heavy-duty, everyday dining.

Key Differences at a Glance

Opacity: Opal ware is opaque (milky white); glass is transparent/translucent.

Strength: Opal ware is significantly tougher and more durable than standard glass.

Maintenance: Opal ware excels in being dishwasher safe with lasting designs; regular glass patterns can wear off.

Function: Opal ware offers superior convenience for heating and storing food due to its toughened nature.

Disadvantages of ceramic plates are their fragility (chipping/breaking), heavier weight compared to other materials, potential for staining, and higher cost; they also require care with extreme temperatures and can have lead in older glazes, making them less ideal for frequent microwave/dishwasher use or outdoor settings than alternatives like stainless steel or opal glass.

- **Fragility:** Prone to chipping, cracking, or shattering if dropped or mishandled, reducing lifespan.
- **Weight:** Heavier than glass or plastic, making them harder to carry, especially for children or the elderly.
- **Staining:** Unglazed or poorly glazed ceramics can absorb food colours, oils, and odours, requiring thorough cleaning.
- **Cost:** Often more expensive than plastic or some glass alternatives.
- **Temperature Sensitivity:** Can crack from sudden extreme temperature changes (e.g., hot plate to cold counter) or intense heat in ovens/microwaves.
- **Lead Content:** Older or poorly made ceramics might contain lead in glazes, posing health risks.

Practical Considerations:

- **Storage:** Heavier weight and fragility mean they need more careful storage to prevent damage.
- **Outdoor Use:** Less ideal for picnics or outdoor dining due to breakage risk compared to metal or durable plastic.

Advantages La Opala is a well-known brand that offers a range of high-quality glassware sets that are elegant, stylish, and durable. La Opala's glass crockery sets are made from high-quality glass that is sturdy, scratch-resistant, and non-toxic.

Features: La Opala RG Limited is India's leading manufacturer of opal and crystal glassware, pioneering these technologies in India with plants in Madhupur, Jharkhand (crystalware) and Sitarganj, Uttarakhand (opalware), offering brands like Diva (opal) and Solitaire (crystal) known for elegant, durable, and dishwasher-safe tableware for domestic and export markets.

➤ **History:** Established in 1987, La Opala introduced opal glass to India in 1988 and crystal glass in 1996, becoming a major player in the Indian tableware market.

Manufacturing Locations:

➤ **Madhupur, Jharkhand:** Focuses on 24% Lead Crystal Glassware (Solitaire brand).

➤ **Sitarganj, Uttarakhand:** A state-of-the-art, fully automated plant for high-quality opalware (Diva brand), using European technology.

➤ **Products:** They offer a wide range of opal glass (dinner sets, mugs, and bowls) and crystalware (barware, vases) under brands like Diva, Solitaire, and Cook Serve Store.

➤ **Market Position:** A market leader in India, competing with global brands, with strong R&D and a wide distribution network, also exporting globally.

➤ **Technology:** Utilizes advanced European technology for high asset utilization and process efficiency. In essence, La Opala is synonymous with quality, innovative designs, and leadership in the Indian glassware sector.

CONCLUSION

La Opala RG Limited is India's leading manufacturer of opal and crystal glassware, known for introducing opalware to India in 1988 and pioneering lead crystal technology. Founded by the Jhunjhunwala family in Kolkata, the company offers brands like La Opala (economy), Diva (premium opal), and Solitaire (crystal), focusing on durable, stylish, and microwave-safe tableware with strong R&D and an extensive distribution network.

- Pioneer: Introduced opal glass and 24% lead crystalware to India.
- Brands: La Opala (budget), Diva (premium), and Solitaire (crystal).
- Innovation: Known for strong R&D, creating microwave-safe, chip-resistant, and thermal-shock-resistant products.
- Market Presence: Extensive network in India, with exports to Asia, Africa, and the Middle East.

- History: Incorporated in 1987, merged with Radha Glass & Industries Ltd. in 1999 to become La Opala RG Ltd..
- Opalware: Lightweight, strong, non-porous, stain-resistant, food-safe, microwave/thermal shock-resistant.
- Crystalware (Solitaire): Handcrafted 24% lead crystal, mouthblown and cut by artisans.
- Company Vision: La Opala aims to enhance dining experiences with elegant, functional, and high-quality tableware, transforming meal presentation through continuous innovation and design.

REFERENCE

1. <https://www.laopala.in/our-story>