

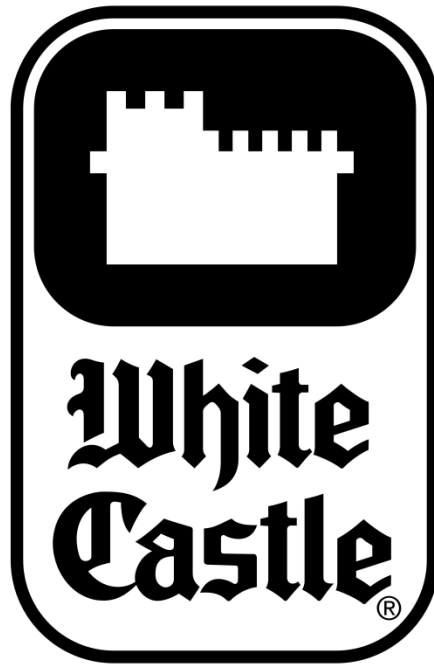
Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs:

1921 to 2021

by Greg Gagliano



Dedicated to White Castle® lovers everywhere!



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1. Introduction

I started collecting White Castle® coffee mugs accidentally. I simply bought a coffee mug every time I saw one available for sale in a White Castle restaurant, flea market or antique shop. After doing this for a number of years – poof – a mug collection materialized.

I put this guide together for myself as well as other White Castle enthusiasts. This guide only covers ceramic and glass mugs and does not include plastic travel mugs, plastic tumblers, drink glasses, plates, etc. However, some of the information presented here may apply to these other items.

If you take away one or two things from this guide, please let it be that 1) “ash tray” mugs were not used or meant to be used as ashtrays (the channels on the bottom let water drain away when they were put in the dishwasher) and 2) not all the white oval mugs with the White Castle shield logo are vintage. In fact, most of the “vintage” mugs for sale are reissues of the original mugs from yesteryear. Not to worry because this guide describes features to distinguish vintage mugs from reissue mugs.

Finally, this guide is admittedly incomplete and, at times, even speculative. If you have information to add, please let me know.

Greg Gagliano

2. The 1920s and 1930s

Everyone knows that White Castle was established in 1921 in Wichita, Kansas. Coffee was served in heavy duty ceramic mugs and some of these restaurant ware mugs have survived to the present day. Because of their rarity, mugs from this era are costly and pursued more by diehard collectors, rather than casual or accidental collectors (like me!).

The Fraunfelter mug has the most basic graphics of all the 1920s and 1930s mugs and represents the earliest mug with the earliest White Castle “castle restaurant” graphic. The Fraunfelter China Company was only in business from 1923 to 1939 so the mug is from this period (back stamp is of no help). The castle graphic contains “Hamburgers 5¢”. White Castle hamburgers were 5 cents from 1921 to 1929 so we know this mug is from the 1920s.

Fraunfelter diner mug (Photos: eBay)





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To make things interesting, it seems that Fraunfelter also sold blank pieces to various companies to do with as they wanted. One of those companies was the Albert Pick Company in Chicago. This next mug could have been made by Fraunfelter and finished by Albert Pick or entirely made by Pick. The mug sports the now familiar White Castle name in old English inspired lettering with a more sophisticated White Castle restaurant graphic with the “tower” portion situated left-of-center.

Albert Pick Company diner mug (Photos: eBay)





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The next few mugs could have been made contemporaneously rather than sequentially. I will go out on a limb and assume they were sequential. Therefore, I'm guessing this diner mug made by Warwick is next in the 1920s line of mug designs. The White Castle restaurant graphic is now three-color and has the tower right-of-center with a mast that projects up into the "C" in Castle. Note the "H" in hamburger is the same as found on the Albert Pick mug.

Warwick diner mug (Photos: eBay)





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This mug, made by Shenango China, seems next in line. Although the castle restaurant graphic is black and white, it has a higher level of detail compared to the one found on the Warwick mug. The tower mast extends beyond the “C” in Castle and the “H” crossbar in the word Hamburger extends past the left leg forming a tail (for lack of a better term).

Shenango China diner mug (Photo: eBay)



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Another diner-style mug was made by D.E. McNicol. It has a color castle restaurant graphic, but this one only has one red awning instead of two as found on the Warwick mug. The tower is right-of-center with the mast through the “C” in Castle and the “H” in Hamburger has a tail. Note, too, that the graphic is placed high on the mug rather than centered.

D.E. McNicol diner mug (Photo: eBay)



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The same graphic was used on another McNicol mug. The mug shape was a little less “diner” and a little more “shaving”.

D.E. McNicol “shaving mug” (Photos: eBay)





The same graphic was also used on a tea cup style mug (maker unknown).

“Tea cup” mug (Photo: eBay)



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Next is another D.E. McNicol “shaving mug”, but with a new three-color restaurant graphic that has the tower shifted back to the left-of-center. The tower mast has been omitted and the “H” retained its tail. The building has a bit of grass on either side of the walkway leading to the front door as well as some vegetation behind the building. The “Hamburgers 5¢” sign is boldly displayed in red.

D.E. McNicol “shaving mug” with three-color graphic (Photo: eBay)



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And finally, in the late 1920s and early 1930s, we see for the first time the classic “oval” shape that most people identify as the quintessential vintage White Castle coffee mug. Made by D.E. McNicol, this mug has the same three-color restaurant graphic on the right side as the previous diner mug. NB – the right side of the mug is the side facing you when the handle is to your right. This convention is used for the rest of this guide.

It also introduced the drain channels on the bottom which people mistakenly think were put there so the mug could be used as an ashtray when the mug is flipped over. Have you ever pulled a mug out of dishwasher only to have water spill all over you because water remained in the bottom depression? Well, these channels are there to allow water trapped by the bottom rim to drain away.¹ That’s the story directly from the co-founder of White Castle, Billy Ingram! Note that this particular mug has three drain channels instead of the usual two.



¹ E.W. Ingram, Sr. “All This from a 5-Cent Hamburger – The Story of the White Castle System”, Newcomen Society of North America, 1964.

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D.E. McNicol oval mug (Photos: eBay)



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A new manufacturer, Mayer China, was chosen in the 1930s and continued to produce White Castle coffee mugs until the late 1970s. The Mayer China mugs retained the oval shape with D-handle started by McNicol. A new black and white graphic was introduced (at least as early as 1931), where the castle restaurant is contained in a shield bisected by crisscrossing halberds with a banner superimposed. The left-of-center tower makes the shield appear offset or asymmetrical. The banner contained the words “The White Castle System of Eating Houses Corp. A National Institution” while the lower part of the shield contained the famous slogan “Buy ‘em by the Sack.”

A feature to note from this period is the bottom rim which is glazed and trapezoidal with two wide drain channels. The Mayer China back stamp shown below was used in the 1930s and 1940s so it can only provide a general date of manufacture.

Mayer China oval mug with offset shield graphic (Photos: eBay)



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Two other versions of this mug exist. The banner title is shortened to “White Castle System, Inc.” flanked on the left by “A National Institution” and on the right by “Established in 1921.” The lower part of the shield remains unchanged with the “Buy ‘em by the Sack” slogan. This mug also has a more pronounced “hook” on the top of the D-handle that was used until the early 1960s. One mug even has a decorative band around the top and on the handle.

Oval mug with offset shield graphic (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Oval mug with offset shield graphic and decorative band

(Photo: ohiomemory.org)



An interesting note about the White Castle restaurant graphics from the 1920s through the 1940s – they are based on actual White Castle buildings. You can peruse photos of many vintage White Castle restaurants at www.ohiomemory.org. Be sure to check out White Castle No. 2 in Cincinnati which has a mast as found on the 1920s mugs, White Castle No. 9 in Minneapolis which looks like the one found on the 1930s mugs, and White Castle No. 22 in Saint Louis which is a dead ringer for the one on all the classic oval mugs made since the 1940s (including the modern reissues!).

3. The 1940s

The 1940s continued with the classic oval mug made by Mayer China. The mug is 3-1/4 inches tall, 2-11/16 inches across the top, and holds about 6 ounces of liquid. The bottom rim is much rounder than those made in the 1930s.

The shield graphic was changed to a symmetrical form with a centered tower. The shield remains bisected by crisscrossing halberds with a banner superimposed. The banner title is shortened to “White Castle System, Inc.” flanked on the left by “A National Institution” and on the right by “Established in 1921.” The lower part of the shield remains unchanged with the “Buy ‘em by the Sack” slogan. Be aware that the detailing in the shield graphic varied slightly although the general layout remained the same.

The back stamps used during this period include “Mayer China Est.1881”, “Mayer China” (no underline), and “Mayer China Beaver Falls, PA”.

Mayer China “classic” mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



1940s shield graphic with extra fine details (Photo: eBay)



1940s mug back stamps (Photos: eBay)



4. 1949 to 1958

The fabulous Fifties were fun because there were two sizes of mugs and four styles of White Castle shield graphic. During this period the mug, made by Mayer China, retained the classic oval, 6-ounce design. The shield graphic applied to mugs made from 1949 to the first quarter of 1953 was the same as used in the 1940s.

1949-52 Mayer China classic oval mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



1949-52 shield graphic (Photo: G. Gagliano)



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Beginning in 1949, there are date stamps on the bottom which make dating the mugs easy. Of course, exceptions exist and occasionally mugs did not have the date stamp applied. The date stamp is easy to decode: QYY where Q denotes the quarter and YY denotes the year. For example, a date stamp of 356 denotes the third quarter (July, August, September) of 1956. The earliest date code I have observed on a White Castle mug is 349.

Mayer China classic oval mug with 1949 date code (Photo: eBay)



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The shield graphic was revised in the second quarter of 1953. The changes included halberd blade shape, larger banner end scrolls, and larger banner lettering size. Note also, the period after “1921” and the apostrophe preceding “em” were omitted.

1953 shield graphic (Photo: eBay)



In the first quarter of 1954, the shield graphic was revised again. The restaurant door's square, diagonal stripe window was changed to a large rectangular window and a double row handle and kickplate were also added. The halberd blades were enlarged and the fancy double helix staff end decorations were changed to three simple chain links. The kerning in “Castle” has the

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“C” spaced away from the “a”. The banner scroll ends and lettering size were reduced. The scroll end shading was made darker and the apostrophe was returned to its rightful place preceding “em”. This graphic remained unchanged until 1959.

1954 to 1958 shield graphic (Photo: eBay)



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A minor detail that should be noted is that beginning in 1956, "U.S.A." was added to the Mayer China back stamp and would remain until the classic mug was discontinued in 1978.

Mayer China classic oval mug with 1956 date code (Photo: eBay)



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A second size mug was introduced in 1956 (456 is the earliest I've seen). It had the same shape as the "classic" mug, but larger with a large C-handle. It is 4 inches tall, 3-1/4 inches across the top, and holds about 11 ounces of liquid. The shield graphic is the same as found on the post-1953 classic mugs, but is slightly larger (2-3/8 inches wide versus 2 inches). This mug has "King Size" placed below the shield graphic. This makes identifying the King Size mug super easy!

Mayer China King Size mug 1956-58 (Photo: eBay)



5. 1959 to 1962

The mugs remained relatively unchanged during this period although the hook at the top of the D-handle was softened on the classic mug (the King Size mug retained the same large C-handle). Sometime in 1959 (or possibly late 1958), the shield graphic changed. This new graphic was used on both the classic mug and the King Size mug. The most notable features of the new graphic are the width (2-3/8 inches vs. 2 inches) and the shield which contains a completely new castle restaurant, lack of “System, Inc.” on the banner, and different word wrap for “Buy ‘em by the sack”.

1959-62 Mayer China classic mug (Photo: eBay)



1959-62 Mayer China King Size mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



6. 1963 to 1976

Would you be surprised to learn that White Castle changed the shield graphic again in 1963? This time, the detailed black and white graphic was replaced with a blue shield containing a basic version of the 1959-62 castle restaurant. The banner only contains “White Castle” and the kerning was altered so the “C” is closer to the “a” in “Castle” (they actually touch). There is no stippling or shading on the halberds and banner scrolls. Perhaps even more interesting, the banner width of the blue graphic is slightly smaller than the 1940s to 1958 banner while the shield and halberds are larger. The blue shield graphic was used on the classic mug and King Size mug through the second quarter of 1976.

1963-76 Mayer China classic mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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1963-76 Mayer China King Size mug (Photos: eBay)



The back stamp changed in 1968 when Mayer China introduced their new logo that omits the underlined “Mayer” and adds a stylized “M” monogram.

1968 Mayer China “monogram” back stamp (Photo: eBay)



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The back stamp changed again in 1969. Here's the backstory - in 1964 another famous restaurant ware company, Shenango China of New Castle, Pennsylvania, bought the Mayer China company. In 1968, Interpace (International Pipe and Ceramics) bought Shenango China and, by default, Mayer China. So, beginning in 1969, the Mayer China back stamp was changed to reflect the fact that Mayer was a subsidiary of Interpace. This was denoted "by Interpace" under the monogram Mayer China logo and was applied to White Castle mugs from 1969 until they were discontinued sometime in 1978.

1969-78 Mayer China by Interpace U.S.A. back stamp (Photo: G. Gagliano)



7. Mid-1970s

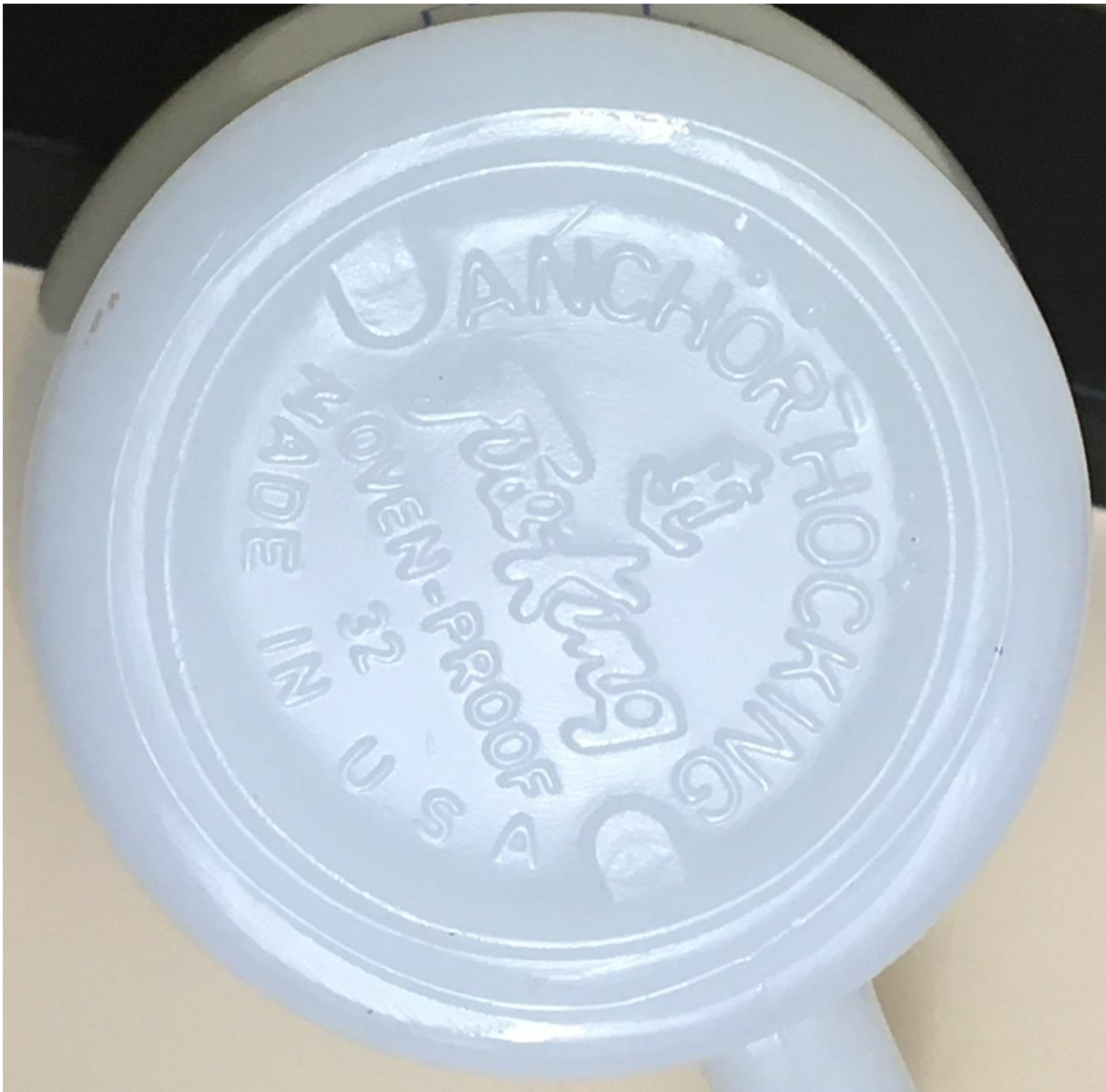
Sometime in the early 1970s, a new style of mug was introduced concurrently with the blue shield classic and king size mugs. The mugs up to this point were made for restaurant use, but this mug, made of Fire King glass by Anchor Hocking, is possibly the first “promotional” mug issued by White Castle. It has a Coca-Cola glass shape with a D-handle. It stands 4-1/16 inches tall and is 2-15/16 inches across the top. The graphics are a simple rampart that encircles the mug along its midline with a trapezoidal White Castle banner below it on the right side. The trapezoidal graphic is known to have been used from 1971 through at least 1980.

The back stamp only gives us a general idea of when they were made. The script Fire King logo and “Oven Proof” are hallmarks of the mid to late 1970s, but the “H-Anchor” trademark was only used until 1976. I have some evidence that these were made in 1973-74, but cannot confirm at this time.

Anchor Hocking Fire King mug (Photos: G. Gagliano, bottom photo: eBay)



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8. 1977 to 1978

This period represents the final two years of production for the classic oval and King Size mugs. Naturally, the shield graphic had to be changed again, this time with a return to the 1950s version. However, when the graphic transfers were made, they lacked the details of the earlier version which resulted in a lower resolution graphic with very dark shading. The lack of detail for the three-link chain on the end of each halberd staff makes it appear that the ends of the staffs are bent at a right angle (remember this factoid because it comes back to haunt us). It's as if the graphic transfers were made from a photocopy of a photocopy.

Not all mugs made during this period received a date stamp, but I believe mug production stopped by the fourth quarter 1978 when Mayer China changed its back stamp logo again. I have not observed any White Castle mugs with the post-1978 Mayer back stamp. Finally, 1978 was the last year for the genuine restaurant ware mugs.

1977 Mayer China by Interpace classic mug (Photo: eBay)



1978 Mayer China by Interpace King Size mug (Photos: eBay)



9. The 1980s

The mugs from this point onward were promotional, not restaurant ware. White Castle reissued the classic oval mug as “Our Founder’s Cup”. These were sold as boxed pairs and “Copyright 1986 White Castle System, Inc.” was printed on the bottom of the box which is the big clue for determining the first date of manufacture. It is unclear if these were sold only in 1986 or were available throughout the late 1980s. Some examples have a “Japan” sticker on the bottom, but there is no maker’s mark. They are slightly shorter (3-1/16 inches) than the original, but still measure 2-11/16 inches across the top. The shield logo is 2-1/16 inches wide versus 2 inches for the original 1940s to 1958 graphic. These reissues are relatively easy to identify by checking for the following features:

- The bottom rim is unglazed and very narrow.
- The D-handle is flattened and more square where it attaches to the body of the mug.
- The shield graphic is placed lower on the mug body and has two distinctive features:
 - the halberd staff ends are simple right-angle hooks,
 - the shading on the lower left scroll of the banner is triangular.

1986 reissue classic mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



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1986 reissue classic mug shield (Photo: G. Gagliano)



1986 reissue classic mug bottom (Photos: eBay)



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Next up is the blue band mug. I remember purchasing this mug at a White Castle restaurant in the late 1980s, but cannot remember the exact year. I believe this mug was available at least until 1990. This ceramic mug has straight sides with a slightly flared lip and a C-handle. The body is glazed in white with blue lettering and there are two bands of blue glaze along the top. There is no maker's mark, but the bottom has a White Castle cartouche and, very occasionally, a round, gold foil "Made in Korea" sticker. Sidebar – the latest use of the cartouche that I have observed was on promotional items from 1992 and early 1994. Back to the mug – the right side has the White Castle logo with the slogan "The taste some people won't live without®". This slogan was registered in 1983 so we at least know we're in the right decade for dating. The left side has the White Castle logo with the tag line "Hamburger Specialists Since 1921."

Late 1980s blue banded mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



10. The 1990s

A new decade brought many new mugs. The first was a standard straight-sided, white glazed piece with a small D-handle that is typically associated with the term “coffee mug”. There is a repeating blue castle graphic around the top. The right side has the White Castle logo and the slogan “The taste for all times®” in blue lettering. The left side has a basic shield graphic in blue that lacks stippling or shading. The copyright line “©1990 White Castle System, Inc.” sits below the shield graphic which makes identifying the date of manufacture easy. There is no maker’s mark though some can be found with a “Made in China” transfer.

1990 mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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In 1991, White Castle released their first mug that commemorated an anniversary, in this case, their 70th anniversary in business. The mug is clear glass with a D-handle. The shield graphic on the right side appears etched into the glass. The banner has “1921” in place of “A National Institution” and “1991” in place of “Established in 1921”. The slogan, “Buy ‘em by the sack”, has been omitted from the bottom of the shield and “70th Anniversary” sits below the shield graphic. There is a Luminarc maker’s mark on the bottom. It’s difficult to see, and nearly impossible to photograph, but it’s there.

1991 70th Anniversary Mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



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At first glance, the mug for 1992 looks like the mug from 1990, but they are not identical. In terms of construction, a large C-handle replaces the dinky D-handle of the 1990 mug. In addition, the bottom of the 1992 mug is beveled whereas the 1990 mug has a thin, flat step. Like the 1990 mug, the 1992 mug is a straight-sided, white glazed piece with the repeating blue castle graphic around the top.

The right side has the White Castle logo, but it is larger than the one on the 1990 mug (2-3/8 inches vs. 2-1/16 inches). Below the White Castle logo is a new slogan “It’s Like Nothing Else. NothingSM” in blue lettering. The service mark (SM) indicates the tag line was not yet trademarked. The left side of the mug brings back the shield graphic. The copyright line “©1992 White Castle System, Inc.” sits below the shield graphic which makes identifying the date of manufacture the mug easy. There is no maker’s mark on the bottom.

1992 mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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I'm making a guess about the date of manufacture for what I believe is the 1993 mug. It could be from 1994 or other year, but it makes sense as it fits here. This mug is roughly square in cross-section, white glazed with blue lettering and has a large D-handle and slightly flared lip. The right side sports the White Castle logo and the left side wears the "Buy 'em by the Sack"® tag line. The bottom is marked "Made in Taiwan".

1993 white square mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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There's no need to guess about the 1994 mug. It looks just like the 1993 mug, but with the addition of the copyright line "©1994 White Castle System, Inc." on bottom of left side. Interestingly, the bottom is unmarked.

1994 white square mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



In 1995 White Castle had a second reissue of the classic mug as well as the large mug (formerly known as King Size). Like the first reissue, the second reissues were marketed as "Our Founder's Cup" and they were sold as boxed pairs. "Copyright 1995 White Castle System, Inc." was printed on the bottom of the box which is the big clue for determining at least the first date of manufacture. These were made in China (some have a "Made in China" sticker on the bottom), but there is no maker's mark. Good news – they are easy to identify. Bad news – they were sold in 1995 and also through White Castle's online store in the early to mid-2000s so there is no way to know exactly what year they are from.

The castle restaurant shield graphic is more detailed than the first reissue graphic, but this is most apparent on the large mug because the graphic is nearly a half inch wider than the one on the classic mug. On the large mug, you can clearly read the "White Castle" signs on the castle restaurant. On the classic mug, the "Buy 'em by the Sack" lettering is not as plump as in the past and difficult to read.

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Identifying features for the second reissue classic mug include:

- The bottom rim is rounded and glazed.
- The D-handle has a pronounced top hook.
- The shield graphic is placed lower on the mug body and has two distinctive features:
 - the halberd staff ends have fine chain links,
 - there is no shading on the lower left scroll of the banner,
 - “Buy ‘em by the Sack” lettering is narrow and less legible than the previous reissue or original classic mugs.

1995 second reissue classic mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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The large mug was also reissued in 1995, but without the “King Size” moniker. The mug is a little smaller than the original king size mug and measures 3-3/4 inches tall and 3-1/16 inches across the time. It sports the same shield graphic as the 1995 reissue classic mug, but has a large C-handle and rounded, glazed bottom rim. As with the classic reissue they were sold as boxed pairs in 1995 and also through White Castle’s online store in the early to mid-2000s so there is no way to know exactly what year they are from. The bottom sometimes has a “Made in China” sticker with an unknown maker’s mark, but as with many stickers, they may have been removed, fallen off, or washed off.

1995 reissue large mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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Another mug was offered in 1995. It's similar to the 1993-94 square mugs, but with the colors reversed. It has a cobalt blue glazed body with white lettering. The right side has the White Castle logo and the left side has the "Since 1921" tag line with the copyright line "©1995 White Castle System, Inc.". Some mugs have a "Made in China" sticker on the bottom with the same (unknown) maker's mark as on the 1995 classic mug.

1995 cobalt blue square mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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The square blue mug was also offered in 1996. The changes of note include dark blue glaze (not as jewel-tone as the cobalt blue 1995 mug), silver lettering instead of white (unfortunately it photographs as white) and the copyright line “©1996 White Castle System, Inc.”. Some examples have been seen with the same sticker on the bottom as on the 1995 mug. It says “Made in China” and contains an unknown maker’s mark.

1996 dark blue square mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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A familiar mug shape arrived for 1997 and 1998. It resembles the 1920s diner and shaving mug shapes, but more symmetrical, like an hourglass with a small C-handle. The body is glazed white with a wide blue band that wraps around the circumference stopping just short of the handle. A new “perspective” White Castle logo resides within a rampart graphic that sits on the upper part of the band. Below it is the slogan “What You Crave®”. The copyright line contains the year and resides on the left side of the mug. Other than the copyright date, the only other difference between the two years is that the 1997 mug has a gold foil “Made in Taiwan” sticker on the bottom and the 1998 mug has a white “Made in China” sticker on the bottom.

1997 hourglass mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)





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1998 hourglass mug (Photos: G. Gagliano, bottom photo: eBay)



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For 1999, White Castle returned to the straight-sided, white glazed, big C-handle coffee mug, but they made it exciting with trivia! The right side has a reproduction of a 1941 advertising poster. The poster depicts a flagpole flying a small banner and a large flag. The banner states “The Result of our Efforts to Serve the Best Coffee in Town” and, below the banner, the flag boasts “15,692,162 cups of coffee”. The flag also contains a graphic of the original classic oval coffee mug. Below the flag is the text “Sold in 1941 by White Castle”.

On the left side, the perspective White Castle logo (SM) sits within a rampart graphic with the “What You Crave®” slogan in a black banner. Below is the copyright line “©1999 White Castle System, Inc.” Some, but not all, of the 1999 mugs have “Made in China” on the bottom.

1999 cups of coffee sold mug (Photos: G. Gagliano, bottom photo: eBay)



11. The 2000s

The mug for 2000 is an anniversary mug so it's really the mug for 2001 to commemorate White Castle's 80th year in business. Before we get into the mug, let's look at a potential issue for confusion – year made versus year sold. This mug was made in 2000, but intended for the anniversary year, 2001. So what do we call this mug – a 2000 or 2001? This is no different than with cars or guitars where the item is manufactured the year prior to its actual “model” or selling year. Since this guide was started with year-of-manufacture (or copyright year) that's what we'll stick with. Just be aware that mugs made after 1990 may have been meant for the calendar year that follows the year of manufacture.



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The marketing folks must have forgotten about the company's 80th anniversary, because instead of something special, the mug is nearly the same as the 1999 mug. The only difference is the "What You Crave" banner on the left side of the mug was replaced with "Satisfying Customer Cravings for 80 Years" and "1921 – 2001". The copyright line was changed from 1999 to 2000. Some mugs have a "Linyi China Silver Phoenix" maker's mark on the bottom.

2000 80th anniversary mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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The next mug was made in 2001, but was also available through the White Castle online store in 2002 and 2003. This mug has a white glazed, tapered body with a C-handle. The right side has a brown, tan and black roundel with “White Castle” and the tagline “Real Good CoffeeSM” in the outer ring. The center of the roundel contains a graphic of a steaming classic oval mug of coffee. On the left side, a perspective White Castle logo (SM) resides within a rampart graphic with the “Coffee You CraveSM” tagline in a brown banner. Below is the copyright line “©2001 White Castle Management Co.” (note this is a change from “White Castle Inc.” used on previous mugs). There are no marks on the bottom.

2001 – 2003 mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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From 2002 to 2005, White Castle once again offered the second reissue classic mug that was made in 1995. The mug is identical to the 1995 version in every way, so it is impossible to know what year it is from (1995, 2002-05). See the description of the 1995 mug for reference.

2002-05 second reissue classic mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



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From 2002 to 2009, White Castle once again offered the reissue large mug that was made in 1995. The mug is identical to the 1995 version in every way, so it is impossible to know what year it is from (1995, 2002 - 2009). Please see the description and photos of the 1995 mug for reference.

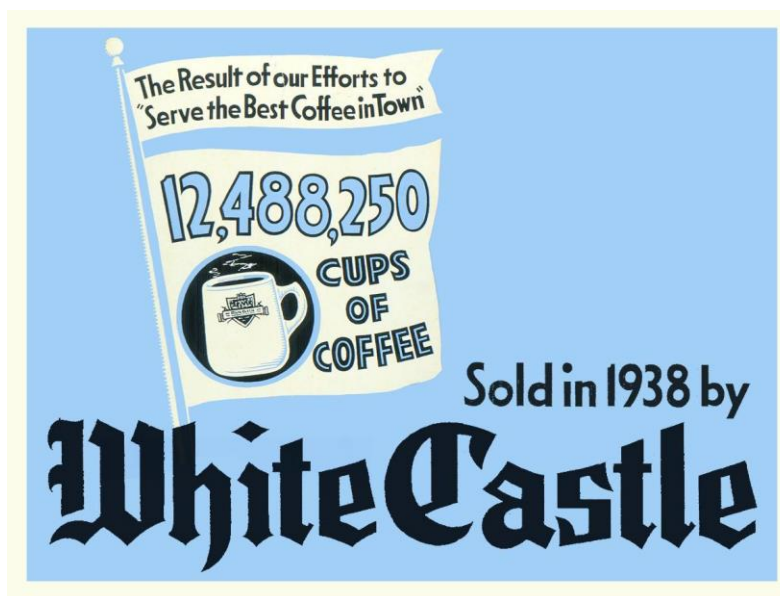
2002-09 large mug reissue (Photo: G. Gagliano)



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The 2003 mug was the last to use the perspective logo introduced in 1997. This mug is straight-sided and white glazed with a blue graphic on the right side. The graphic consists of the perspective logo superimposed on a roundel with the slogan “Always Open Always Tasty”. “White Castle Management” (without “Co.”) is positioned beneath the roundel. Unlike previous perspective logos which are marked “SM”, the final version received the trademark “TM” symbol. The bottom is unmarked.

2003 Always Open Always Tasty mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



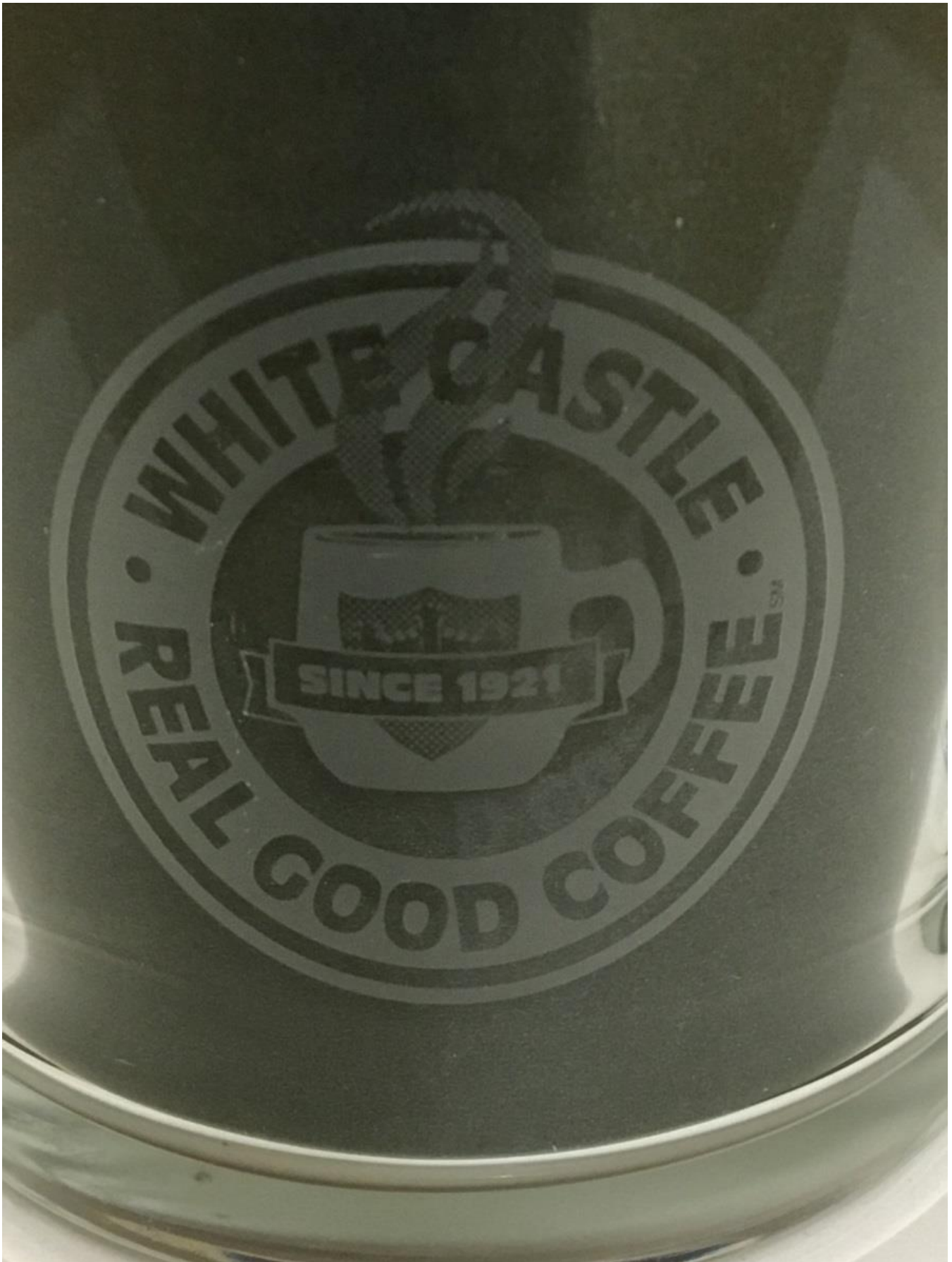
Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The second all-glass mug (the first being the 1991 70th Anniversary mug) was offered from mid-2004 to January 2006 via the White Castle online store. The right side has a “Real Good Coffee” roundel graphic that has the shield on the classic mug in the center of roundel. On the left side resides a new White Castle logo. It has a squarish rampart graphic with shading, but the White Castle logo is not done in perspective.

2004 glass mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)







Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A clear glass mug was also offered in 2005. On the right side is the “Real Good Coffee” roundel and the date “2005” below the White Castle rampart logo.

If you look closely at the steam rising from the classic mug, the cross-hatching is coarser than on the 2004 version (it doesn't photograph well, sorry). Also, the shading on the rampart graphic is less transparent than on the 2004 version.

2005 glass mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)







Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

To celebrate their 85th anniversary, White Castle issued a commemorative mug in 2006. It is a straight-sided, white glazed mug with a D-handle. Both the right and left sides contain the same graphic – a white and blue White Castle “sack” over an orange and white starburst. Beneath is a banner proclaiming “85th Anniversary” and “White Castle Hamburgers” flanked on the left by “1921” and on the right by “2006”. Most, but not all, of the mugs have an “M Ware®” maker’s mark with “China” on the bottom.

2006 85th anniversary mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The offering for 2007 (and available online in 2008-09) was a white, 6-inch tall, tapered mug with large C-handle. The white glaze is accented with an orange rim, orange handle, orange band along the bottom, and an orange bottom. The right side has the squarish rampart White Castle logo graphic first seen on the 2004 glass mug. The rampart is blue and white with orange shading and the “i” in White Castle has a contrasting color for the first time. The left side has the “Real Good Coffee” roundel. There are no markings on the bottom.

2007-09 tall mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The 2008 mug is easy to identify – it is blue, tapered with a C-handle, and has a “wavy” top. The right side has the classic shield graphic in white and the left side has the “Real Good Coffee” roundel. In fact, this is the last mug to use the Real Good Coffee slogan. The bottom of mug may or may not have an oval, white “Made in China” sticker.

2008 “wavy top” mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

There was no new mug for 2009 as far as I can tell. If you've been keeping score, you'll recall that there were two mugs already available in 2009 – the reissue classic oval “king size” mug and the tall, white and orange mug introduced in 2007. It's plausible that the 2008 “wavy top” mug continued to be available in 2009 as well. Or, for conspiracy lovers, maybe the 2010 mug was offered in 2009 (making it a 2009-10 mug).



12. The 2010s

The new decade brought us a straight-sided orange mug with a C-handle in 2010 (yes, 2010 technically belongs to the previous decade, but humor me). The White Castle name is repeated on 16 lines around the mug that terminate on either side of the handle. This leaves a white glazed handle and area beneath the handle. Both the right and left side of the mug sport the White Castle rampart graphic. The bottom sometimes has a “Made in Thailand” sticker.

2010 orange mug (Top photos: G. Gagliano, bottom photo: eBay)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

To commemorate their 90th anniversary in 2011, White Castle issued a white, tapered mug with a large C-handle. Each side is emblazoned with the rampart graphic and a banner encapsulated by an orange outline. The banner proclaims “Since 1921” and “90” denoting the number of years in business. The bottom is printed with “Made in China”.

2011 90th Anniversary mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

For 2012, White Castle introduced a new campaign based on “the crave” that many White Castle lovers experience. This debuted on a wide, tapered, white glazed mug with the slogan “Craver Nation™” fit into a map of the United States located on the right side. The left side has the now-familiar White Castle rampart graphic. The mug’s interior and C-handle are glazed dark blue. There are no markings on the bottom.

2012 Craver Nation mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



The 2012 mug even received its own advertisement!

GIFTS THEY'LL NEVER REGIFT

White Castle

Craver Nation

White Castle

White Castle

LIMITED TIME ONLY
ONLY AVAILABLE IN-STORE. WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. © 2012 WHITE CASTLE MANAGEMENT CO.

Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A tapered, dark blue glazed mug with a large D-handle and white glaze interior was the 2013 mug of the year. The right side has the tagline “crave it hot and steamy” in white, lower case lettering. The left side possesses the White Castle rampart graphic over a light bluish-gray pixelated background. Except for the rim, the bottom of the mug is finished in dark blue glaze. There is an “idegy” maker’s mark along with “Made in China 9/13” and “Hand Wash, Microwave Safe”.

2013 Crave It Hot and Steamy mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

And there is a backstory to the 2013 mug! There were at least two prototype styles that have been observed. The first is a lighter shade of blue and has a blue pixelated background behind a smaller rampart graphic. The bottom has a sticker with a PO number and “Made in China”.

Prototype 2013 mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The prototypes were seen on eBay as well as on White Castle's Facebook page. The second is like the first, but it has the large graphic as on the final mug.

Prototypes for 2013 mug (Photos: White Castle Management Co.)



Unlike the final mug, the prototype's rampart graphic is located on the right side instead of the left side. And at 4 5/16" it is 7/16" shorter than the regular production mug for 2013.



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

Continuing with the crave concept, the straight, dark blue glazed C-handle mug for 2014 has “CRAVE” in large white lettering extending around the mug from left side to right side. Above sits the slogan “The Crave is a Powerful Thing™”. The right side has an orange White Castle rampart graphic within an orange “ink stamp” circle. The bottom right side has the copyright line “©2014 White Castle Management Co.” Some mugs have a small yellow sticker on the bottom with “China” printed on it.

2014 Crave mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

Here's another example of mug being produced the year prior to its release. Based on the copyright date found on the box, the 95th Anniversary mug was made in 2015 for the 2016 model year. The mug is a large version of the classic oval mug. The right side has a stylized "95 years" bounded on the top by the White Castle logo and on the bottom by "Established 1921" rather than the usual "Since 1921". The left side has a monochromatic White Castle rampart graphic centered on the body. Like the classic mug, the 95th anniversary mug has drain channels on the bottom. Some mugs have a "Made in Thailand" sticker on the bottom.

2015 95th Anniversary mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A second mug was also available from late 2015 through 2016 via White Castle's online store. It was shown in a holiday setting so we'll call it the "Holiday" mug. It is straight-sided with a beveled bottom and finished in a medium blue satin glaze on the body and a gloss midnight blue glaze on the rim, handle and interior. The right side sports the white and orange White Castle rampart logo while the left side is emblazoned with the same U.S. map "Craver Nation" graphic as found on the 2012 mug. The bottom is unmarked.

2015 "Holiday" mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



2015 "Holiday" mug (Photo: White Castle Management Co.)



2016 “Holiday” mug (Photo: White Castle Management Co.)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The 2016 mug was the last mug to use the slogan “The Crave is a Powerful Thing”. The tapered cobalt blue glazed mug has, on the right side, a white rampart logo within an “ink stamped” white circle. The left side sports the slogan “The Crave is a Powerful Thing®” along the bottom edge. An interesting observation is this slogan is now a registered trademark while it was marked with the unregistered “TM” symbol in the previous year. The interior is glazed in white and the bottom is cobalt blue with no maker’s mark.

2016 “The Crave is a Powerful Thing” mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The offering for 2017 was a tall, steeply tapered white mug with four rows of multi-colored hamburgers. It's tall, square and colorful and very easy to identify! The right side has the White Castle rampart logo with the 2017 copyright line below inserted into the bottom two rows of hamburgers. The left side has White Castle's latest tagline, "Bold Move™" inserted into the bottom two rows of hamburgers. The bottom is marked "Made in China".

2017 Multi-colored hamburger mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The 2018 mug was designed by the fashion house, Telfar. The blue mug with white glazed interior has a slight taper and a large D-handle. Telfar dropped the rampart logo and, instead, placed “The Original White Castle Since 1921” in a double oval graphic. Rather than placing the graphic so it would be front-facing to the user (or observer), Telfar placed it opposite the handle. This is not ideal for marketing, but a viable fashion choice. The bottom of the mug is marked “Telfar + White Castle”, 2018 copyright line, “@Telfarglobal”, and “Made in China”.

2018 Telfar-designed mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

An interesting mug was offered for 2019. It is short, measuring only 3 1/8" high and has a blue speckled, white pebble glaze screened over a dark blue glaze to reveal the White Castle logo and tumbling hamburger graphic. The logo is on both the left and right sides. A band of tumbling hamburgers encircles the lower portion. The bottom of the mug is marked "Dishwasher Safe", "Microwave Safe" and "Made in China". The 2019 copyright line with "White Castle Management, Co." makes it easy to identify the year.

2019 Tumbling burger mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

The White Castle online store offered another mug from late 2019 until sometime in 2023. Listed as the “Campfire Mug”, it is a short, 13-ounce ceramic mug with a flared lip and D-handle. It is finished with a dark blue, white speckled glazed exterior, a black glazed rim, and white glazed interior that is reminiscent of an enameled steel mug that might have been used by cowboys sitting around a campfire over a century ago. A white rampart graphic is on the right side and the left side is plain. The bottom rim is unglazed and a “Made in China” sticker is affixed.

2019 Campfire mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



13. The 2020s

For their 100th Anniversary, White Castle offered a mug that was a bit of a disappointment for such an important commemoration. Available in restaurants and the online store, the medium blue, tapered mug has a white glazed interior and a satin blue D-handle. The body of the mug has repeating “1921-2021” spiraling upward from bottom to top. The right side has a white and orange rampart graphic with five candles coming out of the top. Below the graphic is “100th Birthday 1921-2021”. The zeros in “100” are slider silhouettes as used on the 2017 and 2019 mugs. The left side has the classic shield graphic, but the logos “A National Institution” and “Established in 1921” are noticeably absent from the banner. Below the shield graphic is “100th Birthday 1921-2021”, but here the zeros in “100” are actually digits. The bottom of the mug is marked “Dishwasher Safe, Microwave Safe, Made in China” with a 2020 White Castle Management, Co. copyright line.

The only unique feature of the mug is the heat-sensitive glaze. When hot liquid is added to the mug, the medium blue changes to a light blue and reveals more clearly the repeating dates and graphics on the body. The effect is beautifully illustrated by the stock photo from the White Castle online store. Unfortunately, these heat-sensitive glazes tend to deteriorate over time.



2020 100th Anniversary mug (Photo: White Castle Management, Co.)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

For 2021, White Castle went back to their coffee theme. The straight-sided mug has a white glazed exterior and interior with a D-handle. The right side has the slogan “We try and serve the best coffee in town” in burgundy lettering with a burgundy and orange rampart graphic with “2021” below. The left side of the mug has the classic old English style “White Castle” name in the middle of a burgundy panel outlined in orange. Below the panel is a 2021 White Castle Management, Co. copyright line. The bottom of the mug is marked “China S 392438”. The mug was also available through White Castle’s online store beginning in December 2021.

2021 Best Coffee in Town mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



14. Miscellaneous

The mug shown below is difficult to place chronologically. It was obtained from a White Castle executive and its year of manufacture is unknown, however, my gut feeling is that it is from the 1990s. It is either a sample mug or one that was given to employees as a gift rather than being made for the general public. It is a little smaller than the usual promotional mugs at 3 7/16 inches tall and 2 7/8 inches wide. It is finer with respect to the material (thin, but not quite porcelain thin) and has a gold band beneath the blue band around the top. There is no maker's mark or any other identifying features. The really odd thing to note is the "Hamburger" text above the White Castle logo. Usually, the slogan "Hamburger Specialists" is found above the logo so one wonders if the lone word "Hamburger" was a mistake or intentional and leads me to believe it's a sample mug.

Executive mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

Here is mug that confuses me. I'm not sure what year it was made, but I'm placing it in the mid-1990s because it resembles the square mugs from 1993-95. It is a little different from the other square mugs in that it is shorter (3-3/4 inches vs 3-7/8 inches) and has a large D-handle. In addition, it has a dark blue marbled glaze with silver lettering. The right and left sides both display the White Castle logo which is smaller and placed higher on the body compared to the other square mugs. The bottom is marked "Linyi" and "Made in China".

1990s blue marbled square mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

This mug, which is similar to the 2007-09 “Tall Mug,” was obtained from a former employee. It’s not clear if this was available to (or given to) employees or was a sample mug. The mug’s size and shape is identical to the “Tall Mug”, but has a midnight blue glaze on the exterior and interior and a white rampart graphic on the right side only. The only mark on the bottom is a “Made in China” sticker.

2007-09 Employee mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)





Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A mug was made in 2013 to celebrate National Hamburger Month. It is straight-sided and glazed midnight blue with a white and orange White Castle rampart graphic on the right side. The slogan “Home of the Original Slider” sits below the graphic. The left side of the mug is emblazoned with a slider graphic sitting beneath a National Hamburger Month arch. Below the slider graphic is a white panel with the date – May 2013. The bottom is unmarked.

Given the white date panel, it seems the design could be re-used every year, but only a few examples of this mug have been found and no examples from other years have been observed to date. It is possible that this mug was available on a regional basis or was available only to White Castle employees.

2013 National Hamburger Month mug (Photos: G. Gagliano)



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For Father's Day in 2013, White Castle offered a customizable mug via their online store. The orange glazed, straight-sided mug has a white glazed interior and C-handle. The slogan "100% Original Dad" is on the left side and the zeros in "100%" are depicted by slider graphics. The right side was used to customize the mug and, in the example shown below, has a photo of a dad with his kids along with the White Castle rampart graphic.

2013 Father's Day mug (Photos: White Castle Management Co.)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

For Mother's Day in 2014, White Castle offered a mug via their online store. The pink glazed, straight-sided mug has a white glazed interior and C-handle. "Mother's Day 2014" is on the right side along with a rampart silhouette graphic.

2014 Mother's Day mug (Photos: White Castle Management Co.)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A couple of regional mugs were made for White Castle in Las Vegas. The first White Castle restaurant in Las Vegas opened in early 2015 and was followed by two other locations in subsequent years. So, these mugs were made in 2015 at the earliest. The first is straight-sided with a white glazed interior and an orange glazed exterior. The right side has a white rampart graphic with “Las Vegas” below. The second mug is tapered with a white glaze. The right side has a white and orange White Castle rampart graphic with “Las Vegas” below.

Las Vegas mug (Photo: unknown and eBay)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

Another mystery mug from the mid-2010s is one that resembles both the 2013 mug and the circa 2015 white Las Vegas mug. It is tapered with a cobalt blue glaze and a medium D-handle. The right side has the White Castle rampart graphic in white while the left side is plain. The bottom is marked “Sino Singware” and “China”. Could this have been another prototype/sample or perhaps a mug for employees?

Mid-2010s mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

This mystery mug has a couple of holes in the handle. At first glance it looks like a small version of the 2007-09 “Tall Mug” based on its tapered shape with orange interior and white exterior. But this mug has more flare at the top and two holes in the handle. It’s not known if this was a sample mug, mug for employees, etc. The bottom is unmarked.

Hole Handle mug (Photo: G. Gagliano)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

A mug that may have only been available via White Castle's online store is what we'll call the "non-slip" mug. This is a white glazed ceramic mug with midnight blue glazed interior. The tapered bottom is covered with a stainless steel cap that has a rubber pad attached to make it non-slip. The right and left sides have a blue monochromatic rampart logo. The rubber pad is imprinted "Crown Products. Whatever It Takes!" and "Made in China". Based on the logo alone, we know the mug was probably made no earlier than 2004.

"Non-Slip" mug (Photos: eBay)



Field Guide to White Castle® Coffee Mugs

About the author: Greg Gagliano is an environmental toxicologist by profession, vintage guitar and amplifier researcher by avocation, and White Castle coffee mug collector by accident. Check out his website at www.ggjaguar.com.



ESTABLISHED IN 1921

White Castle®

Buy'em by the "Sack"