

Exploring Japanese Tea Ceremony Utensils

The great tea masters of the 1500s wanted the tea ceremony to express the idea of *wabi*. *Wabi* is a very difficult word to define. Translators have used the ideas of “simplicity,” “rusticity,” and “imperfection.” The great 16th-century tea master Shuko described it with an example: “Even the moon is displeasing without clouds.”

Look carefully at the tea utensils displayed in the teahouse and the wall cases in Gallery 225.

What do you see that might help explain or show the idea of *wabi*?

How do these things help explain or show the idea of *wabi*?

Tea masters sometimes use commonplace objects like tea utensils in the *wabi* spirit. In the 1500s, Sen Rikyu used an old well-water bucket, for example, and made a flower container out of a hollowed-out piece of bamboo. What commonplace objects around your house might a creative tea master use in the *wabi* spirit in place of the ones you see in the gallery?