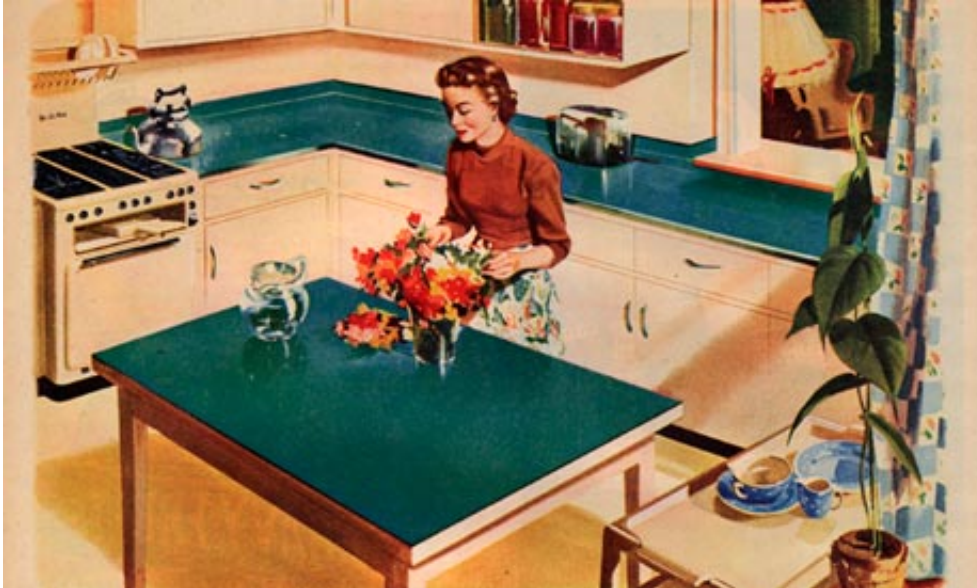


Shiny, happy households: Formica turns 100

Date : February 18, 2013



Laminate fever ... an advertisement for Formica from the 1950s. Photograph: Picture Post/Getty.

By [Oliver Wainwright](#) (forwarded by Fiona McDonald)

[The Guardian](#), Wednesday 16 January 2013

It has lined the [interiors](#) of everything from greasy spoon cafes to luxury cruise liners, from hospital wards to train cabins – bringing a fusion of wipe-clean practicality and sleek modern style. And now Formica is celebrating its 100th birthday. The brave new seamless surface of the future is officially an antique.

While it may now be synonymous with the retro glamour of 1950s compact kitchens and roadside diners, the origins of the miracle material are much more mundane. [Invented in Cincinnati in 1913 by engineers Daniel O'Connor and Herbert Faber](#), Formica laminate was designed to be an electrical insulator, to serve as a replacement for the silicate mineral mica – hence "for mica". (The fact that formica was a [pre-existing Latin word for a type of ant](#) seems to have hampered the brand little.)

Formica originally consisted of layers of fabric bound together with resin; later, it was made with

thick pieces of paper laminated with melamine. This tougher substance could resist heat and abrasion, while the paper opened up a wealth of possibilities for printing colours and patterns, which proved key to its success.

Click [here](#) to keep reading...