

samovar. metal urn, often of brass, with a spigot near its base, widely used in the U.S.S.R., Mongolia, Egypt, Turkey, and Iran to boil water for tea. In traditional samovars water is heated by means of a vertical tube containing burning charcoal, running up the middle of the urn. A filled teapot is set atop the chimney to steep. A lighter brew can be obtained by adding more water to the teacup from the spigot.

The samovar was a Russian invention of the mid-18th century that has become appreciated as an art object today. The first samovar works was founded by a metal craftsman, Ivan Lisitsin, in Tula. Many types—made from red, yellow, and green copper, silver, iron, and Tula steel—were available by the second half of the 19th century. There were chimneyless



Russian samovar, early 20th century; in the Carl Purcell Collection

Carl Purcell

samovars for coffee, dual samovars for coffee and tea, travelling samovars with screw-on legs and handles positioned close to square bodies, and silver samovars with sets of sugar bowls, cups, tongs, and spoons. Handles, spouts, and supports were engraved with flower, plant, and animal designs as well as trademarks, medals, and emblems of the manufacturer. Later types of samovars used kerosene as a fuel because of response to temperature control; others are heated electrically.