What are they?

A pitcher is a container which has been used for storing and pouring liquids since ancient times. Pitchers of various sizes and shapes were used to carry anything from oil to wine to water. Often referred to as a jug, pitchers did not always have a spout or narrow opening for pouring. Jugs would normally be made out of glass or ceramic, whereas pitchers were generally made out of turned wood or moulded earthenware.

Brief History

Vessels of similar design to a pitcher are mentioned in Biblical texts on a number of occasions; however containers for the storing of liquid appear in archaeological records stretching back into antiquity. A ewer, or vase shaped pitcher, became a popular work of art in China during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The Pitcher of Marwan Ibn Mohammad, unearthed by archaeologists in 1930 and dated as 8th century, is currently on display at the Museum of Islamic Art in Cairo, Egypt. In most homes and businesses however, a pitcher would be simply functional, like the example of Irish earthenware below.

DID YOU KNOW?

The word ‘pitcher’ comes from the 13th century Middle English word ‘picher’ meaning ‘earthen jug’, which in turn is linked with the Old French word ‘pichier’ or ‘bichier’ meaning ‘drinking cup’.