

ACCENT

ON HOME & GARDEN

Elegant holiday tables

The power of lighting

Libations for celebrations

Gingerbread houses

Vintage jewelry

November/December 2005

US \$4.95 Canada \$5.95



7 25274 99986 6

Dressing a Holiday Table to the Nines

BY ELIZABETH HOWARD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAN GAIR

After Thanksgiving and until New Year's Day, the dining room became the center of the New Hampshire house where I grew up—it was here that our family's entertaining was done. Before the first Christmas fruit cakes were lifted out from the oven, the dining room table would be decorated. As a small child I was fascinated that a rectangular mirror, edged with rolled cotton batting, could be transformed into a skating rink with the addition of small antique figures; a white covered dish with just a red satin bow and two Christmas balls would assume such an elegant air. The world may have changed, but the spirit, magic and tradition of the holiday season continues and the table remains the center of holiday dining and entertaining.

There are no rules for decorating the holiday table, whether you live in an antique farmhouse or a sleek, contemporary home, and whether you grew up eating panettone or plum pudding.

I am not alone in wanting to relive Christmases past. "Tradition is a constant theme," says Bill Munette, chef and co-owner of The Silver Tureen, a restaurant and caterer in Kennebunk, Maine. "People want to capture the past, even as they live a contemporary life." So Bill, along with his partner and co-owner Robb Schoonmaker, and their team at The Silver Tureen often help their clients select a theme by thinking about the Twelve Days of Christmas.

"We designed a holiday dinner around the Twelve Days of Christmas and it was so much fun that we encourage our clients to think about the song when planning their holiday events," Bill says. The Silver Tureen's extravagant Twelve Days Dinner included partridge stuffed with sausage, chanterelle mushrooms and sage atop sliced poached pear, spiced marinated Cornish game hens scented with rosemary and roast pheasant with berries. "We used shimmery gold ribbons to tie the napkins, and the dessert was a white chocolate swan filled with chocolate mousse or a chocolate cranberry truffle with cranberry coulis." The Silver Tureen can even create real sugarplums, wrapped in boxes with glittery gauze bows, to give as gifts.

Facing page: Shades of eggplant, magenta, moss green and chartreuse lend pizzazz and sophistication to a holiday table, and an elegant departure from the red and green typically used as a color theme for Christmas. Styling and floral arrangements by Kate Parker Design, Dover, New Hampshire. Linens from Ruth Fischer, New York, New York. Dishes, glasses and flatware from Be All Guest in Boston.

of
ss
nd
on
re
m
ly
at
nd
by
in
e.
in
k.
d
ur
n.





Top, right: The Silver Tureen's "Five Golden Rings" specialty is a chocolate cranberry truffle with five rings of 23K gold and cranberry coulis.

Middle, right: "Four Calling Birds" is represented with hand-decorated sugar cookies on top of glazed fruit in a cup of dark and white chocolate.



Using a theme for your holiday party is helpful in thinking about creative ideas for the food and the table. The Silver Tureen in Kennebunk, Maine, used the song "The Twelve Days of Christmas" to plan a festive dinner.

Top left, clockwise from top: "Ten Lord's a Leaping" is a variety of ten fresh baked breads; "Three French Hens" is three roasted Cornish hens scented with sage and rosemary; "Six Geese a Laying," is a fritatta made with six goose eggs, sausage, wild mushrooms, applewood smoked bacon and asparagus; "Eight Maids a Milking," is an eight cheese soup made with eight different families of cheeses from around the world.

Bottom, right: "Seven Swans a Swimming" is a white chocolate swan filled with chocolate mousse swimming in a pool of chocolate.





"Golden Rings"
represented with five rings

represented with
five glazed fruit



Kate Parker, owner of Kate Parker Designs in Dover, has a degree in voice performance, sings opera and worked in opera production before she began her event planning business. She sometimes suggests her clients think about a Victorian theme, which might include tall candles dripping with wax, rich greenery, garlands of cranberries and elaborate decorations of all kinds. "One can exaggerate at a holiday party," she says. For intimate gatherings of 15 or so, she suggests using a floor-length, red-beaded runner down the center of an ivory tablecloth. "Handwrite the menu and place cards, and tuck something into the napkin, perhaps a flower, to coordinate with the centerpiece," she adds. If the dinner is larger, she pushes banquet tables together and uses tall candelabras with candles that have been pre-dripped. "I have used velvet runners for Christmas and even faux mink, for a change."

For Thanksgiving, Kate suggests using burgundy, orange and lime green as a color theme and melding leaves, bittersweet and fall flowers into the floral arrangements and centerpieces. If you want to have a dinner during the holidays that is not related to Christmas, Kate suggests using a sapphire blue and white palette. "I use all white dishes, a stunning blue tablecloth, sparkling crystal glasses and lots of silver. In place of traditional Christmas flowers I sometimes use plants and fill clear glass dishes with colored candies and other delights to match the theme." Think diamonds, icicles and moonbeams reflecting off the snow. Boughs of greens can be spray-painted either gold or silver.

Michele Stump, a managing partner at East Meets West Catering Company in South Boston, describes a holiday party that used similar colors and featured fake snow, billowy gauze, white and blue lighting, and a silver Christmas tree. While her clients focus on family during the holiday season and want more traditional foods and table settings, Michele is always on the lookout for ways to update that

The Black Tie Co



Finely designed Catered Events



Find your *Style*

207 761-6665

www.TheBlackTieCo.com



Fa
the
A s
blu
pa
Ele
fla
of
Sty
De
Fis
fla

sty
rec
lin
mi
It
ho
tak
an
ru
M
an
fav
ma

rec
An
lig
ins
wh
ca
the
av
sp
of

M
fo
yo
ce
up
W
in
w
of

Se
—
E
w
ch
a
w
D
st
K
a

Facing page: Traditional black and white simplify the background for this New Year's Eve table design. A sophisticated black silk table cloth adorned with blue, pink, and orange butterflies and a gold scrolling pattern makes way for simple and bold flowers. Elegant black and gold-rimmed china, ornate gold flatware and modern glassware embody the style of this table. Candles create a whimsical border. Styling and floral arrangements by Kate Parker Designs in Dover, New Hampshire. Linens from Ruth Fischl in New York, New York. Dishes, glasses and flatware from Be Our Guest in Boston.

style. "Instead of using forest green and red," she says, "try using hot pink and lime green with silver and perhaps miniature decorated trees on the table." Items that indicate winter rather than the holidays can be used as a centerpiece on a table or on a buffet. "We have a pair of antique skates and an old red sled with runners that our clients love to use," Michele says. The Silver Tureen also uses antiques, and one of the company's favorites is an American wooden swan made around 1890.

As Kate Parker points out, "Green and red clash with almost every home in America," so she suggests controlling the lighting by having dimmer switches installed in the dining and other rooms where you are entertaining. "Use lots of candles," is Michele's advice, "but have them in votives, rather than as tapers, to avoid accidents." Serve wine and one special drink that complement the flavors of the foods of the dinner or cocktail party.

If there is one thing Bill, Kate and Michele agree on, it is that there are no rules for decorating the holiday table, whether you live in an antique farmhouse or a sleek, contemporary home, and whether you grew up eating panettone or plum pudding. When designing your holiday table, indulge your fantasies and remember when fairy queens, nutcrackers and visions of sugarplums danced in your head. ■

See page 145 for resources for this story.

Elizabeth Howard loves New Hampshire, where she was born and spent her childhood. She is a journalist who lives and works in New York City and London when she is not traveling.

Dan Gair, whose Blind Dog Photo, Inc. studio (www.blinddogphoto.com) is in Kittery Maine, specializes in architectural and food photography.

Your home is special to you,
and very special to us!



The Mail
Home Serv

Nobody Outcleans Th

603-964-1633 or 978-

Custom Wide Plank Flooring

Whether it's the casual simplicity of *Caribbean Heart Pine*, the classic elegance of *Brazilian Cherry*, the richness of *Brazilian Walnut*, or the sophistication of *Santos Mahogany*, we delight in the opportunity to help you create a floor that is "uniquely yours".

At SeedTree, we'll help you every step of the way. We'll advise you on options and considerations, never losing sight that in the end, "it's all about you". Our passion, our pride comes from delivering a floor that exceeds your expectations. You do have a choice.

Please visit our showroom in Atkinson, NH to find the perfect hardwood flooring for your home.

SeedTree
EXOTIC WOOD

2 Route 111, Atkinson, NH 03811 | 800-319-6422 | www.seedtree.com