

Home for the Holidays

How to add some festive flair to your home this season

BY VALERIE HARDY

'Tis the season to entertain family and friends. This is definitely a jolly time of year, but it can also sometimes feel overwhelming to know where to begin with holiday décor and fare. Luckily, with the help of some local design and baking experts, adding extra holiday cheer to your home this year is as easy as peppermint pie.



ACCENT AWAY WITH FESTIVE PILLOWS

Holiday Decorating Tips

For easy yet festive touches for any room in your home, take these top tips from Chad Esslinger Design.

Add Wreaths.

"I like to use simple boxwood wreaths to add some festive color throughout the home," Esslinger said.

Go for the Gold (and Silver).

"I use gold or silver ribbon to hang wreaths in front of mirrors and windows," Esslinger noted.

Accent Away.

According to Esslinger, "pillows are a favorite way to add in color and texture any time of year. During the holidays, I swap out the everyday accent pillows with holiday-inspired ones."

Photography courtesy of Picture Perfect House.

Tablescape Tips

Follow these tips, courtesy of Michelle Gentile Interiors, to transform your everyday table into an elegant centerpiece around which to savor the holidays with your loved ones.

Decide on a Color Theme.

This can be easy by starting with linen selection. Keep it neutral or get playful with colors

For the tablescape pictured, the theme is "Playful Elegance," Gentile said. "I decided to use a festive textured runner to keep it casual, and I didn't want the harsh contrast with white napkins, so I used cream napkins with pretty stained glass napkin rings."

Start with the Centerpiece and Work Outward.

"I like to use layers in my centerpieces," Gentile explained. "[The one pictured] consists of a tray with a magnolia leaf wreath on top, a large bowl, then a large hurricane. I used simple plastic ornaments to fill around the hurricane and added some gold and white stars to add drama."

Mix Glassware and Plates for a Playful Feel.

For the table pictured, Gentile decided to use wine glasses that have a fun, festive pattern and add contrast with the water glasses made from recycled glass. She said, "The contrast makes a fun mix, and the white pattern stands out from the cream plates and napkins."

Think outside the box. Rather than use all the same place settings, add in smaller plates or serving dishes from different sets "Mixing styles is fun and unexpected," Gentile said. "Just make sure the colors coordinate."

Create Moments by Adding in Fun Items and Candles.

"The centerpiece is the show-stopper, but on either end of the table you can create 'little moments' - like adding a glitter tree, a rustic bird, and add ambience with votive candles," Gentile said.

It's All in the Details.

Adding the miniature trees, silverware rests, or place cards gives the design a custom feel. Gentile "had custom name tags made by a local calligrapher, Nancy Belda. It makes the guests feel important and like you thought about them before the party."

Photography by Krista Sobkowiak. Tablescapes styled by Michelle Gentile Interiors with accessories from Maple Home Market. Laura Hernandez Denk assisted.

TABLESCAPE IN THE HOME OF ERIN MIKE KOLSCHOWSKY



Merry & Bright DIY Prosecco & Sorbet Cocktail Bar



COCKTAIL

Give your holiday guests an after-dinner drink and dessert all in one with these festive adaptations of the traditional Italian intermezzo (palate cleanser): Sgroppino, which consists of vodka and Prosecco topped with a scoop of lemon sorbet, often garnished with fresh mint.

All you need to make a chilled and cheery Prosecco & Sorbet Cocktail is:

- Prosecco
- Vodka
- Assorted flavors of sorbet such as cranberry, raspberry, lime, & cinnamon
- Garnish options such as fresh cranberries, raspberries, lime wedges, mint leaves, sprigs of rosemary, & cinnamon sticks

Recipe:

Approx. 1 cup Prosecco - chilled
 2 Tbsp vodka – chilled
 1 scoop seasonally flavored sorbet (1/3 - 1/2 cup)
 Accent garnish to taste

1. Pour Prosecco and vodka into a champagne flute.
2. Add scoop of sorbet.
3. Top with garnish and serve.

Cranberry Buckle Recipe

Whether you are searching for the perfect wintery breakfast treat or a dessert to cap off your holiday dinner, look no further than this beautiful cranberry buckle. This sweet yet tart single-layer cake with a streusel topping is a charming classic that is sure to delight the palate of any guest (including kids from 1 to 92). *Recipe courtesy of Jen Johnson - @levaindg.*

Makes: 8-10 servings

Prep time: 15 min.

Cook time: 60 min.

Streusel Topping

1/3 cup flour
 1/3 cup sugar
 1/4 tsp kosher salt
 5 Tbsp unsalted butter – cold
 1/4 cup walnuts (optional)

The Cake

1 3/4 cups flour
 1 tsp baking powder
 1/2 tsp baking soda
 1/2 tsp kosher salt
 1 1/2 sticks unsalted butter – room temperature
 1 cup sugar
 2 eggs
 1 1/2 tsp vanilla
 3/4 cup whole milk Greek yogurt
 8 oz cranberries – fresh or frozen

1. Preheat oven to 350°F. Cut a circle of parchment paper to fit a 9" round cake pan and place in bottom of pan. Butter or spray pan with cooking spray.
2. **Make the streusel topping:**
 Mix flour, sugar, and salt. Rub butter into dry ingredients until crumbly. Add walnuts if desired. Refrigerate until ready to use.
3. **Make the cake:**
 Sift together flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt.
 In a mixing bowl with paddle attachment, beat butter and sugar for approx. 2 min. Add eggs, one at a time, and mix to incorporate. Add vanilla and yogurt: beat on lowest speed. Add dry ingredients (best if you add half and mix, then add the rest and mix again).
 Gently fold in cranberries. If using frozen cranberries, let them thaw a bit before folding in.
4. Spread batter in prepared pan. Sprinkle streusel over top. Add some cranberries if desired. Bake for approx. 60 min. The top should be golden brown and no longer jiggly in the center.
5. Allow to cool for approx. 15 min. When sufficiently cooled, invert on a plate, then turn right-side up on a serving platter. Serve in wedges. **NOTE:** If time allows, cover and let sit for one day to allow flavors to more fully come together before serving.



JEN JOHNSON BAKES A CRANBERRY BUCKLE, A FAMILY FAVORITE FOR THE HOLIDAYS.