

TABLE *Settings*

By: Starr Miller



As we get closer to the holidays...

I always get a bit excited. I love being with friends and family. Cider by a warm fire, cocktail parties and dinner parties just get my juices flowing. As a young girl my mother impressed upon me that if you serve people on your fine china they will feel special. She said, "To serve on paper plates makes the visitor think that you are thinking more about a quick clean up than you are about making your guests feel special and welcomed in your home." Now, this does not mean that I don't enjoy a good, big, boisterous party with paper plates and plastic cups,

because I do! (Please invite me!) But I do want you to think about occasionally taking a breath and enjoying the process of entertaining on a small scale while savoring the decadence of the ritual.

Tips:

TABLE LINENS — If the table itself is attractive, ditch the tablecloth! Instead use placemats, a beautiful runner, or a large scale scarf or fabric not used in the traditional way, but gathered and swirled around the table. Mirrors add reflective light for candles. Ribbons woven together in groupings can add color and structure. For an organic feel try burlap with frayed edges, sod, large tropical leaves, sand (careful not to ruin rugs and carpet!), slate (place padding on side that meets the table), thin round cuts from a tree trunk or grass cloth. To challenge the status quo, try yachting flags or an unblocked painted canvas from the flea market—the possibilities are endless!

CENTERPIECES — Make sure when you sit at the table you can see straight across to the diner on the other side. Large floral centerpieces that obstruct the view across the table become an annoyance that ultimately cause your guests to give up talking to the people on the other side of the table. One option is to have tall flowering branches on the sideboard and something organic on the table. This could be coral, fruit, grass cut in an architectural form, succulents or books covered with wrapping paper then stacked and fanned. Buttons in different sizes and colors placed in jars and vases can provide an eclectic feel. You can use your favorite figurine collection as a

centerpiece. Candles at varying heights and diameters and on a variety of candle holders is always romantic and sexy. One of my favorite tricks is to pick one high impact color (red, spring green, bright yellow) and use it in the placemats, the flowers, the napkin rings and then just balance it with a neutral such as white, grey, brown or black; high impact without too much fuss.

CANDLES AND FLOWERS — I love, love, love them both. However, make sure that neither has a heavy scent when used in conjunction with food. There is nothing worse than a home smelling like an aromatherapy spa when you are serving a hearty meal with the heavier fall flavors and aromas.

CHINA, CRYSTAL AND SILVER — Do not keep these things locked up to use only once a year! They can make any day of the year a bit more special! Mix and match if you do not have enough for an event. It will add a conversation starter as people admire each other's place settings. If you are bored go buy some dessert/salad plates that will coordinate, but add pizzazz.

Remember life is not about planning to clean up after the party. It is about the way you and your guests feel during the party. Relax and have fun. Make your party stunning! 🍷



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