



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING GUIDE

from our families to yours.



SHELLEY KILLINGER
GROUP



HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

“BLESSED IS THE
SEASON WHICH
ENGAGES THE
WHOLE WORLD IN
A CONSPIRACY OF
LOVE.”

- HAMILTON
WRIGHT MABIE

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Happy Holidays, friend!

As we wind down a tumultuous year, it feels SO good to start the holiday season! I'm not going to lie, it's a week before Thanksgiving and our Christmas tree is up. What can I say, we needed a little holiday cheer! Even though the holidays may look a bit different this year, with smaller gatherings and perhaps far-away relatives joining in via zoom, there is SO much to celebrate in this holiday season. I'm looking forward to some time at home with family, decorating and making our house feel more cheerful and cozy, and enjoying time together celebrating.

I've always been a champion of simple entertaining, because less truly is more sometimes, and this year is no different. Subtle decor, a decidedly unfussy menu, a simple signature cocktail, and a beautiful yet surprisingly easy-to-pull-off charcuterie board are my go-to tricks for simple and fun get togethers. I'm hoping that the recipes, inspiration, and entertaining tips on these pages will help bring joy and holiday cheer to your home!

Cheers!

Shelley & The Team



TIPS FOR A SIMPLE HOLIDAY TABLE

SIMPLE, ELEGANT HOLIDAY TABLE SETTINGS

The holiday table setting. It's a concept that inspires (and sometimes terrifies) holiday hosts this time of year. After browsing home magazines and beautiful posts on social media, you might feel that your holiday table setting needs to be overly fancy, or that you need to spend a lot of money in order to make a beautiful table. But the truth is that a perfectly elegant table setting doesn't need to be complicated or expensive. With just a few items from your local whole foods or target, along with everyday items you already have at home, you can create a table setting sure to inspire holiday cheer.

THE TRUTH IS THAT A PERFECTLY ELEGANT HOLIDAY TABLE SETTING DOESN'T NEED TO BE COMPLICATED OR EXPENSIVE.

We created two table settings - one ore geared toward fall, and the second a more Christmas theme. We used runners we already had at home, paired with seeded eucalyptus and flowers from Whole Foods (they have a surprisingly awesome selection of cut flowers!). We also picked up a variety of squash to use in the fall table setting, and just borrowed a few Christmas ornaments from the tree for the Christmas variation. The candlesticks and napkin rings pictured are quick finds at target by Hearth and Hand.





Tips for a simple holiday table

Putting together a beautiful table doesn't have to be complicated or overwhelming. Here are a few tips to make your table sparkle this season!

Less is more. Remember, if you are serving food at your table, less decor is sometimes better so that you can have enough room for the turkey and sweet potatoes. Also, keep in mind that your centerpiece should not be so large or bulky that it keeps guests from having conversation while sitting down.

Think of colors in advance - Especially think of items you can't change, like your Grandma's china that you use every year (which we used in this photo). You need to make sure the color of those hard to change items "goes" with the other elements of your table. Also, don't be afraid of using a bold color - just be sure your other elements coordinate!

Add fresh flowers - fresh flowers add life to your table, and they're inexpensive, yet oh-so-classy.

On our table settings we used fresh eucalyptus as a stunning fall centerpiece, and red roses to add a bit of holiday color.

Candles add instant ambiance and really go a long way in dressing up a space. Add votives for a little extra shimmer, or tapers for dramatic effect.

Seasonal objects - for a thanksgiving table setting, we used a variety of pinecones and squash. To make it feel a bit more like Christmas, we added in inexpensive gold Christmas ornaments straight from the Christmas tree.

Set your table in advance. It might seem silly, but setting your table the night (or even a few days) before your get-together will help to streamline everything on the day of. If you are using fresh flowers, we recommend placing those the night before to avoid wilting.

More than anything, remember that your guests are excited to share a fantastic meal, talk, and spend time together. Try not to stress over the details so that you can enjoy the time together as well!



EASY HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING HACKS



Easy Holiday Entertaining Hacks

1. Serve fancy water. Choose a pretty container and add slices of fruit or cucumbers with ice to the water.
2. Serve a signature cocktail in lieu of a fully stocked bar. Avoid the hassle (and expense) of a fully stocked bar by just serving a beautiful signature cocktail and wine with dinner.
3. Consider pre-made foods that would coordinate with the items you are preparing. It allows you more time to spend making your favorites (like my mom's stuffing balls), and helps tremendously with clean up in the kitchen. For example, if you don't enjoy or have time to make dessert from scratch, pick something up from your local bakery!
4. Prepare as much as you can in advance. Setting the table the night before was a huge aha moment for me. Also, if you have menu items that can easily be prepared the night before, take advantage! Dinner rolls, many appetizers, cut vegetables for a veggie tray, etc can all be easily tackled the night before.
5. Try a charcuterie board. It's a great way to kick off a get-together, and it buys the host a few extra minutes to wrap up final details in the kitchen. Not to mention, it looks super fancy without all of the work!
6. Add atmosphere – guests are looking for warmth, coziness, and cheer at a holiday get together. Use candles, light a fire in the fireplace, and have some merry music playing in the background.



RECIPES

FOR SMALL GATHERINGS



Margarita Shrimp Cocktail

- 1/2 c. mayonnaise
- 2 tbsp refrigerated honey mustard salad dressing (or mix Dijon and honey together to taste)
- 1 tsp grated lime peel
- 1 tbsp fresh lime juice
- 1 tbsp tequila, if desired
- 32 deveined shelled cooked extra large shrimp with tails on (about 2 pounds)

In a medium bowl, mix all ingredients except shrimp. Transfer dip to a decorative glass or bowl and position shrimp around it on a large platter.



Oh-so-fancy Charcuterie Board

- 2 soft cheeses, such as brie and mozzarella
- 2 hard cheeses, such as cheddar and parmesan
- 2 cured meats, such as salami or prosciutto. (We used smoked salmon on the board above!)
- Place items neatly around the board, alternating meats and cheeses.
- Add extra goodies! (Honestly the sky is the limit here!). You can add apple slices, grapes, or even small pickles and blue cheese stuffed olives. Cashews or flavored almonds are a hit too.
- I like to add a dip or a spread as well - We used a dill cream cheese spread above which pairs beautifully with smoked salmon. If you'd like the recipe, check out the recipe section! You could also add a fig spread, pepper jelly or a course ground mustard, depending on the cheese and meats you are serving.
- To make it look extra fancy, add a sprig or two of rosemary!

Start with a nice board..or several if you want to put in different locations. Avoid the temptation to go purchase something, and just use what you have at home; a wooden cutting board, slate board or serving tray. Be creative! The idea with a charcuterie board is to purchase everything at the store pre-made and put it all together right before guests arrive, (with the exception of the dill cream cheese spread, which is easy to whip up in just 3 minutes.)

Charcuterie is my secret weapon for looking like I "have it together" when people come over. It's so easy to assemble, looks elegant, and let's be honest, who doesn't like wine and cheese?
--Shelley



Homemade Smoked Salmon

"One of my husband, Mark's favorite things to do is try out new recipes on the smoker. After visiting one of our favorite restaurants in the Laurel Highlands, he put together a copycat recipe of their smoked salmon. It is delicious and is something we thoroughly enjoy on special occasions - especially during the holidays! Pair this smoked salmon with the dill cream cheese spread recipe on the next page!" - Shelley

Ingredients

- 2 fillets of salmon (wild caught is best)
- Salt, for dehydrating
- Maple syrup
- cherry wood chunks, for smoking

Directions

Coat salmon in salt the night before and let rest in the refrigerator to draw out moisture. When you are ready to cook the salmon, wash off the salt, and brush on a coating of maple syrup. Place salmon on foil and place in prepared smoker. To prepare your smoker, burn cherry wood until smoker temperature reaches 225 degrees. Smoke salmon for 2.5-3.5 hours, checking temperature of the smoker regularly. Cook until internal temperature is 140 degrees. After smoking, remove salmon skin and serve!

This dill cream cheese spread pairs beautifully with smoked salmon, or just solo on a cracker. It's a great treat for the holidays! --Shelley



Dill Cream Cheese Spread

- 1 cup whipped cream cheese
- 2 tablespoons sour cream
- Fresh dill (1 -2 tsp chopped, to taste)
- 1/4 red onion, diced
- 1 jar capers
- Sea salt, to taste

Mix all ingredients together in a bowl. Serve with smoked salmon or with crackers or crostini. Store in a closed container in the refrigerator for 2-3 days.



Stuffed Mushrooms

Ingredients

- 1-1/2 lbs (20-30) White button mushrooms (larger mushrooms work better)
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 2 tbsp butter
- 2 tbsp onion
- 2 tbsp red pepper
- 14 Ritz crackers - crushed in a large storage bag
- 4 tbsp Parmesan cheese (save some for garnish)

Instructions

Remove all stems from mushrooms. Chop them finely and set aside. In a large skillet, heat the olive oil and then add the butter. When the butter is melted add the onion and red pepper and sauté until soft. Add the chopped stems and cook for about five minutes. Take off the heat and add in the crushed crackers and Parmesan cheese. On a large baking sheet put the mushroom caps upside down and fill each one with the stuffing mixture sprinkle with more Parmesan cheese and chopped parsley for garnish. Bake at 400° for 15 minutes. Serve directly on baking sheet or transfer to decorative platter.



Pulled Pork Sliders

Ingredients

- 3 lb Pork Butt Roast
- Salt & Pepper
- Brown Sugar
- Olive Oil
- BBQ Sauce
- Slider Buns

Instructions

Cut Roast into 4 equal pieces. Sprinkle 4 pieces with salt, pepper. & 1 tbsp of brown sugar. Heat InstaPot with 1 tbsp olive oil and set to Sauté. Sear meat on all sides 1-2 minutes. Remove pork and turn off sauté feature. Immediately add 1/2 c water and scrape brown bits that formed on the bottom. Add bbq sauce about 1-1/2 cups. Add pork back into pot and lock on the lid. Set high pressure cook for 60 min. Quick release after cooking is finished. Remove pork. Set to sauté again and allow the sauce to boil. Reduce liquid about 10 min. Shred pork with 2 forks in a large bowl then add back into sauce. Set to warm and serve right from pot. Serve on slider buns. Enjoy! Turn off sauté and add 1/2 c water



Nana's Stuffing Balls

Ingredients

- 2 king size loaves of bread
- 1 bag of seasoned bread cubes
- 2 cans cream of chicken soup
- 2 cans cream of celery soup
- 1 med onion
- 1 cup olive oil
- fresh ground pepper, to taste
- fresh parsley, to taste
- 2 celery sticks

Instructions

Let bread dry out. Cut/tear bread into small pieces. Sautee celery and onion in small amount of oil until soft. Add to bread pieces. Mix 1 can of cream of chicken soup (undiluted), pepper and parsley, and mix well. Make balls the size of walnuts or larger and put in greased casserole dish. Mix remaining cans of chicken and celery soup and 1 full can of water to make dressing. Pour over stuffing balls. Cover and bake for 45 minutes at 350 degrees. Uncover and bake 15 minutes longer.



Butternut Squash & Leek Soup

"I can't take any credit for this recipe - it is from Kristen Cavalleri and her new cookbook, True comfort. (I HIGHLY recommend it!). I only made small alterations to the recipe. I love it so much that I'm actually thinking of serving it for Thanksgiving with our turkey! It is healthy and comforting - all in the same bowl. " --Shelley

Ingredients

- 2 containers butternut squash, cleaned and chopped from grocery story. (You can also substitute whole butternut squash, just slice in half, scoop out seeds, and roast in the oven following instructions below).
- 3 medium leeks, cleaned and thin sliced.
- 1 tsp paprika
- 1 tsp dried thyme
- 2 tsp chopped fresh sage
- 1/2 tsp ground turmeric
- 1/4 tsp ground nutmeg
- 5 cups chicken stock
- 1 cup milk
- 1/2 tsp champagne vinegar
- Sea salt, to taste
- avocado oil, for roasting

Directions

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Roast butternut squash on parchment lined baking sheet (if using whole squash, cut the squash in half and lay open side down on baking sheet). Drizzle with avocado oil for roasting. In large sauce pan over med-high heat, add the leeks and saute for 15 minutes, or until soft. Add paprika, thyme, sage, turmeric, nutmeg, and a pinch of salt. Add the cooked squash, chicken stock, milk, and champagne vinegar and stir until fully combined. Bring soup to a simmer and let cook for 20 minutes, stirring often. Add salt to taste. Working in batches, transfer soup to a blender and blend on high until smooth. Serve in a bowl with chives or croutons as a garnish, and of course, with a slice of crusty bread!




DRINKS WITH HOLIDAY FLAIR



Holiday Sangria

- One bottle of Lambrusco
- 1/2 cup triple sec
- 1 cup Merlot
- 1/4 cup blackberry brandy (optional)
- 6 oz can of lemonade
- 1/2 cup of orange juice
- 1/2 cup of lemon juice
- 2 cups Ginger Ale

Mix together in a large pitcher and add slices of oranges, lemons and apples. A bag of frozen fruit is great also and keeps the sangria cold. Can be doubled or tripled!



"One of my favorite tricks for hosting a holiday party (or a party any time of the year, for that matter) is serving a signature cocktail. It avoids having to offer a fully stocked bar, which can be pricey and complicated. In addition, there are SO many delicious cocktail recipes that can be made in large batches, or are simple enough that guests can assemble themselves at a drink station, that it frees the host (YOU!) and allows for time to enjoy the party and mingle."

--Shelley



Apple Cider Mule

- Crushed ice
- 3 ounces cider
- 1- 3 ounces ginger beer, to taste
- 2 ounces vodka (remove if making a mocktail)
- Apple slice or cinnamon stick for garnish