

Chic holiday entertaining for less

Tips and tricks to make any holiday party a blast

A beautiful holiday table can be the centerpiece of any celebration. However, many hosts and hostesses are discouraged by the idea and potential cost of fancy linens, expensive serving ware and a perfect centerpiece.

"A beautiful table doesn't have to be costly," says Target Style Expert for Home and HGTV designer Sabrina Soto. "Layering in key holiday trends to your everyday pieces can be a cost-effective way to create a one-of-a-kind dinner table."

Soto, together with celebrity TV chef and Target culinary partner Giada De Laurentiis, offer the following tips for creating a festive, yet affordable holiday setting.

Set a beautiful foundation :: Instead of feeling compelled to use traditional red and green hues, any color combination can be the basis for a festive table, says Soto. She favors soft, season-less colors for decorating with added touches of gold and silver, which work with any color scheme and interior aesthetic. You can use everyday dinnerware, but create a holiday feel by adding glamorous metallic chargers, chic beaded placemats or napkin rings.

Add elegance with a striking center-

piece :: Centerpieces are the focal point of an elegant table but don't need to be expensive to be beautiful. A single silver or metallic accessory can increase the glam factor of your centerpiece or try clustering several accessories for a sparkling effect. Polish up grandma's old silver vases or purchase some inexpensive mercury glass items such as hurricane or votive candle holders — the season's hottest trend.

A crystal vase for the centerpiece can elevate the table's elegance quotient. Fresh flowers can be pricey during the holidays; Soto suggests filling the vase with small glass ornaments. Mixing mirrored ornaments with fresh pine cones or seasonal fruit can make for a festive yet sophisticated decorative piece.

Plan a stress-free menu :: A beautiful table sets the stage for an evening of delicious food and warm conversation. Plan ahead and prepare most of the food in advance, rather than trying to cook everything at once. You'll feel less stressed and will be able to enjoy the party.

"Try to leave only one item for last minute

prep — this brings everyone into the kitchen and sets the tone for a cozy, comfortable evening," says De Laurentiis. "I prepare most dishes in my ceramic bake ware because it can go directly from the oven to the table, and still look great."

To further simplify the menu, De Laurentiis suggests selecting foods that can be served at room temperature. Try a red pepper or basil cheese cake that can be made ahead of time, and will be fine sitting out before the party even begins. While foods like fish or shrimp are delicious, they are hard to keep fresh if you are serving food buffet-style.

By combining beautiful pieces that you love with classic elements, anyone can create an exquisite look for the holidays. ::

—ARAContent

Tips galore

For more holiday decorating ideas and affordable design that will add elegance to any table, visit Target.com/Christmas. Still need more tips and inspiration, try MarthaStewart.com/entertaining or HGTV.com/light-up-the-holidays/package/index.html. *The Charlotte Observer* has regular local and national entertaining, home decorating, food and other features at CharlotteObserver.com/living/.



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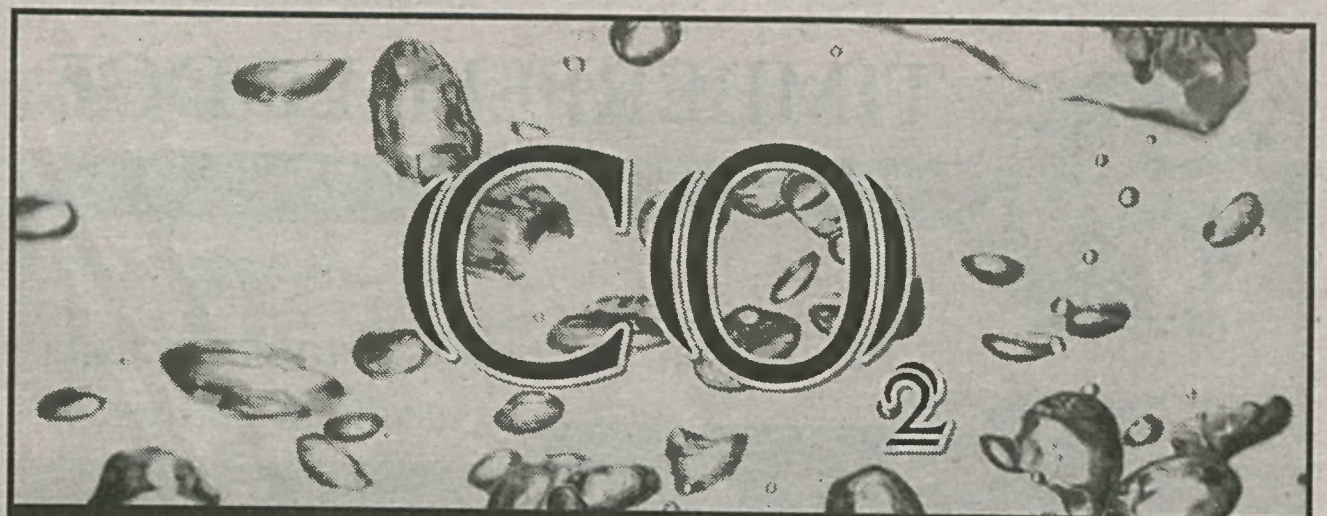
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