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[ENTERTAINING]

BY ERINN VALENCICH



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

Thanksgiving Day in America is a time to offer thanks, of family gatherings and holiday meals. A time of turkeys, stuffing, and pumpkin pie. Now more than ever, there is nothing like family and friends gathering for Thanksgiving with all its trimmings.



Fall is in full swing. All across America the weather is crisp and the foliage colorful. This season, romanticism reigns, taking its queue from the catwalk and translating into the home. Cozy knits and cashmere throws, old world tweed and antique polished wood—now is the time to bring out the warm tones to combat the chill in the air.

The Look—Casual and warm with a modern twist. Play with colors of fall, chocolate, taupe, amber and contrast with crisp white. Picking a color palette for your table is crucial for a finished look.

Think the Lodge meets the Plaza. Mix simple bowls with streamlined platters and sleek, extra tall glassware. Have fun with materials, accenting ceramic with glass, wood and metal. Oversized candles sparkle as the centerpiece with potpourri scattered in between. I love to pick up some branches and berries to accent my table, either real or fake—as long as they look good who cares! Place a few berry branches in a deep amber vase as a centerpiece and flank with wood-themed candles. I got mine at Z Gallerie and love their beautiful grain!

Toss out that old tablecloth and opt for glamorous chargers and crisp linen napkins. Don't forget to layer your dishes—it makes the place setting taller and sparkle with interest. The finishing touch: Japanese maple leaves at each setting, or a single baby pear perched on the plate.

MY FAVORITE THINGS FOR FALL



Favorite Chair
(it's a sickness I know, but I LOVE chairs!)
Scalamandre chair in plaid.



Favorite Party Plate
Olivewood cheeseboard. Love its natural shape.
ArtisanalCheese.com



Favorite New Catalog
Williams-Sonoma Home. Check out their Davis desk—so fab! WSHome.com



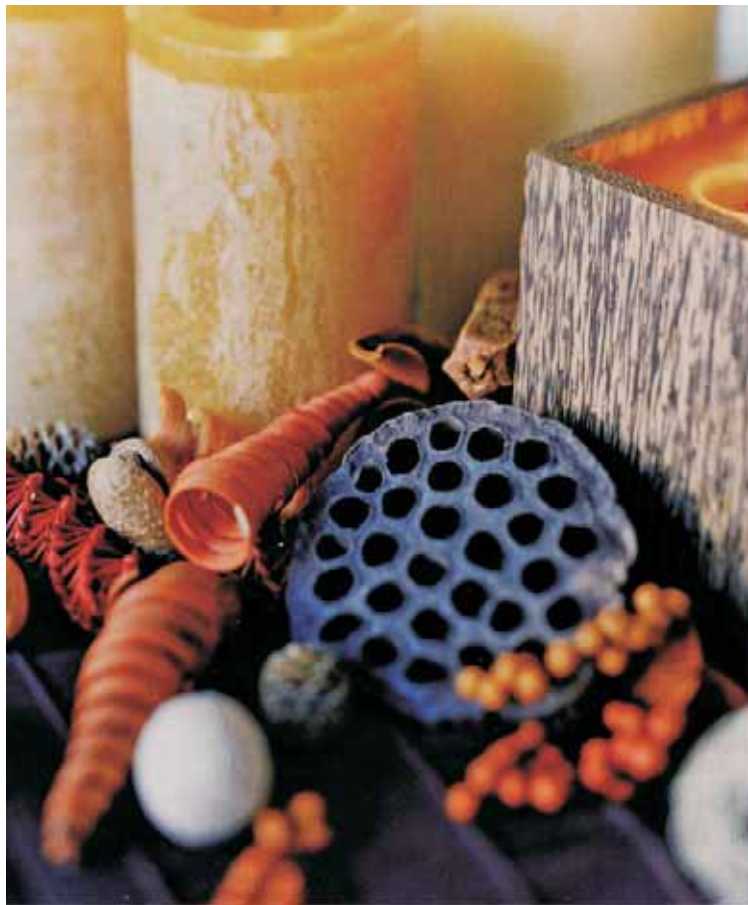
Favorite Serving Set
Michael Aram Twig set. Makes a great hostess gift.
MichaelAram.com



Favorite Trend
Candlesticks are back—in every shape, finish and size. Group them together for a very of-the-moment vignette.



Favorite Red Wine
Clarendon Hills Grenache (Australia). At \$70 a bottle, it's well worth the cost of admission.
SilverLakeWine.com



If spending a Thanksgiving cooped up in your kitchen fills you with dread, have no fear. I've developed a helpful timeline to ease the load. Follow this countdown and you'll have plenty of time to spend with friends and family.

THREE WEEKS AHEAD:

- Prepare your guest list. Firm up how many people will be there.
- Find out if there are any special dietary needs for your guests—and decide if you want to cater to them.

TWO WEEKS AHEAD:

- Decide on your final menu.
- Assign cooking projects to family members who offer to help. Tell volunteers how many people their dishes should serve.
- Order your fresh turkey, or buy your frozen turkey and put it in the freezer.
- Order or pick up alcohol and other beverages.
- Shop for non-perishable goods now, before the rush. You can buy items such as flour, sugar, brown sugar, corn syrup, canned pumpkin, fresh or frozen cranberries.

ONE WEEK AHEAD:

- Shop for non-perishable vegetables, such as butternut squash, carrots, potatoes, parsnips and turnips.
- Buy heavy cream now. In the days before Thanksgiving, it can be hard to find.
- If necessary, wash and iron linen or polish silver. Dig out your turkey roaster and platter and any serving dishes hidden away in closets or high shelves. Don't wait until the morning of Thanksgiving to do that.

THREE DAYS AHEAD:

- Defrost. If you have a frozen turkey, clear a space in your fridge and put the bird in now so it will be fully defrosted on cooking day.
- Clean the house—enlist household members who aren't cooking. If you're having a lot of guests, you may want to set up the table and ensure you have enough chairs.



TWO DAYS AHEAD:

- Bake as much as you can today. Make pumpkin pies or pumpkin cheesecake, as well as rolls, and breads, including cornbread for stuffing. Put pies in the refrigerator; you can always warm things up again before serving. Don't make apple-pie baking today, however. The crust won't stay flaky and crisp.
- Make things that can sit for two days in the fridge such as soups, cranberry sauce, and items such as sweet potato or green bean casserole, which can be stored uncooked in the refrigerator, to bake on the day.

ONE DAY AHEAD:

- Set the table. It's easiest to do it now.
- Do any remaining baking, including that apple pie.
- Buy your salad greens and perishable vegetables. Wash lettuce leaves now, dry well, and store by packing them in paper towels in a plastic bag in the refrigerator.
- If you ordered a fresh turkey, pick it up from the butcher.
- Calculate your cooking time for tomorrow and the sequence for your cooking. Figure out what time that turkey needs to go in the oven.
- Figure out what can't be cooked along with the turkey in the oven, either in terms of temperature or space. Plan to prepare those things before or after the turkey is done, or on the stovetop while it's cooking—or, better, make them today.

THANKSGIVING DAY:

First off:

- Prepare stuffing for the turkey, plus extra to cook on the side.
- Prepare your vegetables for cooking—cleaning, peeling, chopping. Cover the ready-to-go vegetables and put them in the refrigerator. You can even boil potatoes now in preparation for mashing later.

Cooking time:

- Stuff the turkey and get it in the oven according to the schedule from the store where you purchased it.
- Just before the turkey's done, begin cooking vegetables.



While the cooked turkey is resting:

- Put a foil tent over the turkey. You now have about an hour to do the remaining cooking.
- If you have a pan of stuffing on the side to bake, put it in now.
- Warm whatever needs to be warmed, including rolls, soups, casseroles.
- Mash the potatoes.
- Make the gravy.
- Put all the food on the table or buffet. Don't hesitate to press guests into service to put food in bowls, open wine bottles, top up glasses, and dish up the cranberry sauce.
- Get a plate and eat! Don't spend the meal running back and forth to the kitchen and end up missing out on the Thanksgiving feast you created. •



Erinn Valencich

Erinn Valencich (va-len-sich) is an expert in interior design, entertaining and garden style. Her sought-after flair for creating elegant, glamorous and contemporary environments has established her as an innovative tastemaker. She is one of the few lifestyle experts to cross over multiple genres with over 7 years experience in the industry.

Her style has caught the eye of numerous celebrities, having worked with Antonio Sabato Jr. and Jennifer Love-Hewitt. She designed the 2006 Academy Awards Suite for **Extra!**

Embraced by the media, Erinn's talents and style sensibility have made her the go-to designer for creative tips and trends.

Erinn's easy going attitude and flexible style allow her to stand apart in the sea of designers. Her clever use of existing elements to make the most of any space has made her a sought-after spokesperson for products indoors and out.

"In this changing, fast paced world, people are focusing even more on creating a stylish and comfortable environment for themselves and their families" she says. "A house is more than just a place to live, it should be full of life, self expression, and illustrate your passions to those who visit." She founded her company, Omniarte Design (OmniarteDesign.com), to facilitate her growing clientele across various industries.