

Stylish Solutions

The Holiday Dining Room

... continued from page D7



A favorite trick is to match flowers to a signature drink. Sparkling cider looks fantastic in champagne glasses and gorgeous with white flowers. It's one of those design details people can't quite pinpoint but is registered by the mind's eye.

Photos by Ashleigh Hodges

You may be wondering why I use odd words when putting together holiday dining rooms. Honestly, these words come out of the discussions we have around the design table when planning and implementing design events. We use them because the diversity gets our creative juices flowing. It is way more interesting to come up with topography than simple floral arrangements. The word itself opens up ceilings, balconies and all manner of arrangements. You'd be surprised how creative you can get with this.

The type of event you will plan in your dining room refers to basics: number of people, buffet or sit down, formal or informal. It could be as simple as having a plan for breakfast for those overnight guests who will be staying in November or as complicated as a sit

down dinner for 150 covering a few rooms in your home.

Second is transition. This single item is *key* to a great gathering in your holiday dining room. In order for even a small gathering to flow properly, you must plan and provide for transition. Remember your conversation, your eyes, your feet, your food, your drink. All of these need forms of transition. If you have ever been to a seriously dull party, poorly executed transition is likely one of the problems.

It can be simple transition space for conversations which means low centerpieces for easy sight lines and flow or intentional traffic patterns through a larger dining room at different stations for different types of food and beverages to keep guest moving and the party humming.

This is one of the most overlooked planning

components. It also provides for one of the most interesting, from a décor standpoint.

Topography: Look up, look down, look around. I have this 'thing' my assistants joke about – watch what she does with the ceiling! I love using varied heights and unexpected ingredients to draw the eye up, down, into and out of various spaces. You'd be shocked what you can do with a bolt of fabric. For one featured event we used 35 yards of navy sheer fabric. Up on a ladder, we literally threw the bolt over the beam, tacked it and then carefully placed magnolias from the Dollar Store in Moraga to give it interest. We used the draping in four areas of the event. This draping (topography) lent itself to transition from one area to another while providing fun visuals during the buffet (type).



Dining room floral for a recent event. Notice the reflection in the mirror of the topiary.