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Stylish Solutions

By Ann McDonald



Guest bedroom in a cabin. Hudson Bay slippers that match the room make guests feel like no detail is overlooked. Photo Peter Medilek

several relatives who bring with them different requirements. I would often run through my mental checklist and then worry - what am I forgetting that pertains directly to them? It finally hit me. Make a list (in some cases a file) that pertains to that guest only. Edit what worked and what didn't after they leave.

We have a pet friendly home and as an animal lover, I welcome the pets that come with their people. As such, it's important to me that pets have a nice time as well. Extra pet beds? Check. Extra bowls? Check. Appropriate leashes and treats? Check.

For generational differences, it's important to think outside the box. For elderly guests I always make sure to have items they may need but may not necessarily want to have to ask about. Be gracious and simply present 'personals' in a pretty storage box or basket in their room. Don't forget extra reading glasses, extra reading lights, pens and paper on the desk next to the bed, a comfortable chair in the bedroom and Advil or Tylenol for a stiffened knee. Always cap off a guest room, especially a temporarily converted space in your home with a pretty flower in a vase.

These little things indicate you care enough to know what they might need. Protect their privacy and give honor as best you can, especially when there is no official guest room. I keep copies of these check lists handy both in my design studio and in the laundry room in case I bring in a home helper to set up the space. One list for her, one list for me equals no missed items!

2. Shop for and style vignettes by color. Because we have multi-function rooms, the bedding my teenage sons use is not necessarily the same bedding I want my mother- and father-in-law to enjoy while they stay. I create separate vignettes for different guests or by room and use color to separate them.

This helps me keep track of which items go together and there is no back and forth over last-minute design issues. We did this for a single person guest suite in a cabin. With bold Hudson Bay blankets as the anchor, every detail was whimsical and fun, down to the matching slippers. Because guests aren't long term, it's OK to have some fun with the bedding.

The turkey is ordered, the farmers' market run is on the calendar and you are getting your home ready to host family and friends for the Thanksgiving holiday. We chatted last month about setting the table and creating an inviting atmosphere but what about the rooms where your guests will stay? In my home, we have several rooms that are multi-purpose but we don't have a dedicated guest room. Each time we have overnight guests, there is some kind of transition that has to take place in addition to the deeper cleaning required with a house full of boys and pets.

I confess, in years past I would panic. Did I clean under the desk? Are dirty socks in the closet? What about the dust ruffles on the day beds? When were they last cleaned? Is there dog hair that I no longer see? Maybe you have a series of questions that run through your mind each time guests come to stay.

Here's how this fussy decorator finally conquered those last minute details:

1. Make lists for specific guests. One of my biggest issues is the "what if" question. We have

3. Use designated baskets for specific vignettes and include every item for easy set up. For those with smaller homes or no guest bedroom, this is one of my top tips. We create a designated basket and essentially create our own version of "room in a basket" with: sheets, bed coverlet, mattress cover, nice towels, embroidered robe, slippers, beautiful pillows both for sleeping and decoration, soaps, shampoos, sewing kit and other sundries.

This way, when 'Guest A' is on her way, we know to pull the Blue Toile Basket and set up the spare studio space and guest bath accordingly. I will sometimes include a photo of how the space was set up last time just for easy reference.

I store the completed baskets in the laundry room or storage area under the house and confess I do shop year-round to take advantage of luxury sales so these sets are the best quality I can afford.

Finally, I cannot stress the importance of immediately washing, folding and re-storing in the proper basket, the vignette you created. The next time you need it, there is no running around and your fresh towels don't end up on the pool deck or washing a car.

As more of us are working from home or finding our spaces have to do double duty, these stylish solutions keep us on trend and feeling like we've made an honorable effort when hosting out-of-town guests. It's not about having a royal-sized guest room, though those can be fun and fabulous, it's about creating a home where your guests are honored and feel welcomed, no matter the size.

Details like a dog treat for a cherished pet, a beautiful pillow that is just theirs or a makeup towel and extra set of reading glasses goes a long way.

May your holiday home be filled with laughter and good cheer. Happy Thanksgiving!

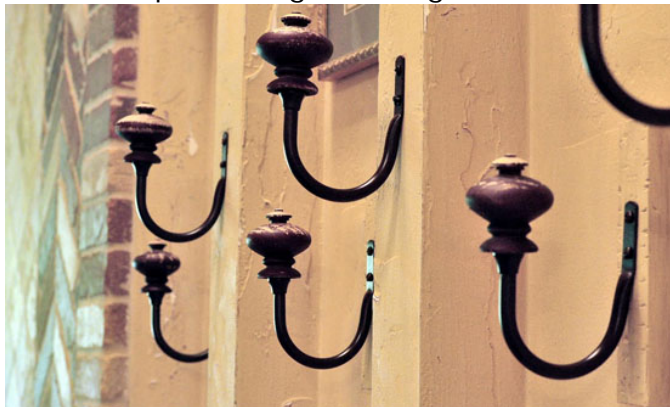
Do you need help with your remodel or design project? Give us a call at (925) 386-0720 or email us at ann@couturechateau.com.



Using decorative pillows can take an ordinary kid's bedroom and bump it up for guests. Featured is a Couture Chateau pillow, lined and interlined made from an antique textile. Photo Couture Chateau llc



When outfitting a cabin or second home, order slippers, embroidered robes and towels - black makeup towels are great. For a lovely guest experience at home, even and especially if you are using a sofa bed or child's room converted for the night, consider investing in a few designer robes with a simple monogram or "guest." Photo Couture Chateau Ilc



Use hooks inside double duty rooms for easy care items like robes, towels and even welcome notes for guests. Photo Couture Chatteau Ilc



Ann McDonald, IIDA, NAPO, is the Founder/CEO of Couture Chateau, a luxury interior design firm in Orinda. For a complete blog post including photos of different guest hosting ideas, visit www.couturechateau.com/blog.

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