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Stylish Solutions

Last Minute Holiday Décor Ideas

By Ann McDonald



We're nearing the holiday finish line. But just as we start to run through it, have you ever had this happen? You are feeling all warm and cozy and then your friend or spouse utters these words "we should..." followed by an off the cuff invitation to host a last minute get together at your home. No problem, you say. It all sounds fabulous when you have sugarplums in your head, but then you arrive home and realize you never quite pulled the holiday décor together.

Suddenly the tree is looking more Charlie Brown than Pottery Barn, the dining table is strewn with holiday cards and your kitchen/family room looks more like a shopping bag factory than an inviting space to host friends.

What to do? First, don't panic. You don't have to redecorate or spend \$5,000 with overnight shipping from a luxury holiday store to get ready

inside of 72 hours.

Here are my top tricks to get you, the stylish suburbanite, on track fast.

1) DO: Think outside the box. Take a deep breath and remember, if you are headed out last minute for supplies, the traditional holiday product shelves may well be barren. A chipped Santa or painted wooden snowman is not exactly couture level decorating. Use the lack of choices to your advantage and stay true to your home's current color scheme. Purchase beautiful accessory items you can use all year with ease. Think sets of pretty glasses, pots or planters that match your home, silver anything.

2) DON'T: Reinvent the wheel. Remember, the reason we decorate our homes for the holiday season is to bless, not to impress. That means if we love something someone else has done and it blesses us with beauty, that is enough. At market a few months ago, I sourced topiaries that were stunning, expensive and made to order. For my own home, they were not practical financially or from a time standpoint. What did I do? I separated the elements as inspiration and created my own.

My team and I gathered planters and pots I already owned (we call it shed shopping), purchased faux boxwood balls with battery operated lights and went to the back yard to find striking oversized tree twigs which we used instead of antlers.

3) DO: Use items that work year round. One holiday vignette was created with an eye towards re-use once the season was over. Because we were on a tight budget, we headed straight for Ikea. First stop? The carpet section. I often use carpet squares or Ikat rugs as placemats and runners to achieve a luxury look for less on dining tables, entry hall consoles and even in overscale powder rooms with large counters.

Every element is multi-purpose and non-holiday specific. It was a massive hit. Fresh, fast and talk about budget friendly.

When you are battling holiday overload and really do need to ready your spaces, give yourself permission to wander the aisles of stores you can escape in for inspiration. I will set aside up to 90 minutes, identify the need (holder for silverware) not the product (a silverware holder) and start to wander. For this project, the light bulb went off in the bathroom accessories area when we saw a pretty display holding towels. The soft baskets looked like chunky white sweaters. Very on trend.

Because we identified the need, our mind was open to different solutions.

Here are a few of my favorite closing thoughts:

* I prefer faux to real when purchasing boxwood and moss unless you have a large budget and are OK executing repairs.

* The time honored wreath can be laid flat on a table to surround hurricane candles.

* The dried tree branch is the best free staple around. I use them raw, embellish with glitter, spray paint and even bejewel them for clients. Place a dried tree branch in vase with playground sand for weight bearing. Make certain the vase won't crack from pressure. Hang simple ornaments from the branches. Uplight for drama.

Have a blessed holiday and I will see you in the New Year!

If you need help with your decorating project, visit <http://www.couturechateau.com> or give us a call at (925) 386-0720. Happy holidays and Happy New Year!



We used carpet squares with mirrors laid flat, shredded holiday cards, and a soft basket filled with the same type of shredding to hold the buffet silverware and a candle with glass hurricane. Photos Couture Chateau





These displays we sourced for a client were out of budget range for me this season in my own home. To duplicate the type, I purchased faux boxwood balls with battery operated lights and then added dried twigs instead of the antlers and placed them in blue and white planters we use all year. Simple, elegant and very cost effective.



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