

Stylish Solutions

Summer Entertaining

When your party colors don't match your home décor

By Ann McDonald



Using napkin rings is a great way to hide any fabric size imperfections. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau LLC

We've all been here: The weather clears, the summer sun works its wonders and it's time for a party! Visions of the perfect linen shift, coordinating sandals and jewelry, gorgeous table tops, matching flowers, a signature drink, invitations, friends enjoying a summer get together ... you can see the entire event in your head.

You even pick out a theme and color palate. Not too kitsch, just jaunty enough to serve as an outlet for your creative juices.

Then it hits: The realization that your 'Ideal Summer Party' will clash like the titans with your year-round décor.

The funeral dirge plays in your head. You wonder do I have time to redecorate the entire house before the party? No, you don't. However, the following are some

of our insider tips to make it all work.

1) Buy a 30-yard "half bolt" of fabric. Choose a neutral fabric in linen or cotton that works with your year-round décor. I always keep the following on hand: beige linen, white linen, beige boucle, white boucle, sage green velvet and white velvet. Yes, I like to entertain!

2) Arm yourself with the best quality pinking shears you can afford and hide them from your family. Gingher, KIA and Fiskers are the brands I use. Test-drive different brands. We all have our favorites and, yes, I do hide them.

You can now buy fabric shears in more than the traditional zigzag, but I like the zigzag for this particular DIY because you will want a slightly frayed edge to work with.

3) Find a large flat surface and start cutting out nap-

kins and table runners. I use my dining table or the floor in my studio. Mark with a straight edge that is long enough to cover the entire width. I like using a level I picked up at Home Depot because it keeps my lines straight. I overlay a long flat-edge ruler as well.

Bolts of upholstery weight fabric are typically 48 to 54 inches wide. That means you can get two napkins across at 25 square. I typically opt for only two across, since the better, more natural fabric, when washed, will have a lot of shrinkage and thread pulling from the zigzag-cut edge, which you want.

Do the same for cocktail napkins and table runners or place mats.

4) Wash them. Yes, I said take your beautiful upholstery weight fabric and wash it. When upholstery fabric is shipped, it contains protective sealers to ward off bugs and if it's rated for commercial application, there will be additional fire retardant, even with the most eco-friendly brands. We always wash fabrics twice before using in applications like this, especially if we are making custom linens to be used near food.

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Threads will work their way out of fabric as you wash it, which is good.