

Easy El Niño Home Prep

By Andi Peterson Brown

I know, I know—it's 80 degrees out and I'm writing about prepping your home for rain. But El Niño is looming, and if you are anything like me, once the holidays hit, getting up on the roof to clean the gutters is just not going to happen. Thus, there is no better time than a warm fall weekend to spend a few hours preparing your home for the cold, wet weather that is just a couple short months away. These easy tips can prevent future costly repairs, lower your utility bills, and ultimately protect your largest investment from the impending deluge.

- **Clean your gutters.** It's so easy and yet so hard. But failing to clean your gutters can lead to leaks as well as cause long term water damage to your siding, roofing, and wood trim.

- **Inspect your roof and flashing.** Been some time since anyone's been up there? For minimal cost, a roofer can inspect, diagnose, and perform basic repairs.

- **Extend downspouts.** Water should drain a few feet away from your foundation, not flow right onto it.

- **Caulk around windows and doors.** And those foam and fabric front door draft stoppers—yes, those, the ones on late night infomercials for twelve bucks—they work wonders.

- **While you're at it, why not inspect your heating system.** For minimal cost, an HVAC technician can tune up, clean, and perform basic repairs to ensure your system is running at maximum efficiency.



CalBRE# 01738605

andi
PETERSON
BROWN

A CB Top Producer
AndiBrownHomes.com
925.818.4588



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Stylish Solutions Stress-Free Fall Tables

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The buffet table is easy to set up. Start with chargers or trays so guests aren't balancing just the plate on their lap. Lay out food just as you would serve it and finish with napkins (see tea towel suggestion) and serve-ware at end.

Example: 132-inch table plus 24 inches for fabric overhang (12 inches each end) equals 156 inches; 156 divided by 36 (the length of one yard) equals approximately 4 1/3 yards.

By purchasing five to seven yards, you accommodate for shrinkage and can use extra fabric to cover pedestals for food or for visual interest around a centerpiece.

Where to get these fabrics? Everywhere! From discount stores to online fabric shops. Make sure to wash fabric ahead of use, especially if near food. The un-ironed look is nice for fall as it is more casual. If you have a round table or are using folding tables, consider using an under cloth in a solid color to hide the legs and then the upholstery fabric to sit on top, where most people see.

Now, to the setting. There are lots of ways to set tables these days, and the old rules have been thrown out for many. You are free to mix styles, textures, materials and even colors on the same table. It is very au courant to mix interesting chairs at a dining table, especially for larger groups. We've all seen the gorgeous clean-lined 60-foot-long table with matching chairs – which is lovely for an outdoor gar-



Use upholstery fabrics to cover your table instead of the standard cloth. Here are four we have set aside for harvest through Thanksgiving and into December. By switching out the centerpieces and table settings, the look is changed.

den party – but for the indoor fall events, just like the mixing of colors with the leaves, I recommend mixing your colors and textures.

Don't try to force a look when it is not happening in nature. No guilt over not having 40 matching plates or chairs!

Let me know how your table setting goes. For the perfect holiday home join in on our Stress Free Holiday Workshop series. You can access it 24/7, 365 days a year and it includes the option of a printed workbook. I even include my infamous cookie bribery recipe, which works to keep family decorating help happy while hanging garland. For information, visit <http://couturechateau.com/holiday/>.



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