

Fresh Style

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'Tis the SEASON

Some of our favorite designers and tastemakers from coast to coast share how they celebrate the holidays

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'TIS THE SEASON
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What signals the start of the holiday season to you?

LETA AUSTIN FOSTER

I own a boutique in Palm Beach, and things really get Christmasy when the holiday items begin to arrive. We place these orders in May, so it's exciting to unwrap them and rediscover their beauty all over again.



JANE SCOTT HODGES *In New Orleans, we kick off the holiday season with a drive down St. Charles Avenue to see the beautifully decorated homes and the streetcars adorned with wreaths rattling on the tracks.*

I know holiday time is in full swing when I see my favorite hellebores blooming. And when my clients start frantically calling for help with last minute, preholiday party touch-ups!

—MICHELLE NUSSBAUMER



I have a “Christmas in July” kind of moment when we shoot the products in my holiday line, but the holidays officially arrive when I bring out the Thanksgiving platters, linens and accessories. All of the ornaments and Christmas objects are unpacked and ready for decorating by the first of December.

—SUZANNE KASLER



TAMMY CONNOR

Since childhood, my Christmas season has begun when the white lights are strung and turned on, illuminating the oak tree in Birmingham's Mountain Brook Village. I am always sad when they are turned off after the New Year.

BARCLAY BUTERA | As crazy as it sounds, the season gets kicked off when I break out my plaid sport jackets. I really am “mad for plaid.” I can’t get enough of it—in fashion and in home décor.



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What is your most cherished holiday décor?



DANIELLE ROLLINS

As a child, my parents gave me Steinbach nutcrackers every year for Christmas, and now my children give me one each year to add to my collection. When they were much younger, my mother would help them select one and wrap it, teaching them the joys of collecting, anticipation, family traditions, and most importantly, the joy of giving rather than receiving. They're usually so excited to watch me unwrap the gift that it rarely makes it to Christmas morning under the tree!



I have an assortment of snow globes that I have been collecting since childhood. I have about 25 of them that I scatter throughout the house.

—JAN SHOWERS



JOHN MARSHALL WATSON

I acquired a collection of Christmas tree candle holders when I lived in Denmark. I actually light them on the tree, which both entertains and terrifies my guests!



I love decorating with natural greenery from North Carolina. Outside on the garage doors, I do large, fresh wreaths with big red bows. Inside, I stick to a limited palette of natural greens and classic paperwhites.

—SUZANNE KASLER

JANE SCOTT HODGES

We have a set of silver holiday bells from my mother-in-law that we hang every year from the chandelier in our dining room. That was her tradition, and it reminds me of our happy times together.



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What are your holiday entertaining essentials?



MICHELLE NUSSBAUMER

Friends, family, and my lamb-and-mint meatball recipe. And I can't do without fresh flowers.



LETA AUSTIN FOSTER

Rigaud's Cypres Bougie D'ambiance candle is my must-have, but I'm fond of their cinnamon-scented candle too.



BETH WEBB

A well-stocked bar and a good Southern cheese straw!

CHARLOTTE MOSS *Scented candles, Motown Christmas music, and evergreens everywhere—from the front gate to the mantels to the tops of bookcases.*



A good, original cocktail makes the perfect icebreaker. I love serving them in vintage etched-crystal coupes. I'm partial to a French 75 for the holidays, but they pack quite a wallop!

—DANIELLE ROLLINS

An exquisitely set dining table. I always use my Ralph Lauren Empress dinnerware, Ricci Bamboo silver, and cobalt glassware. Fresh paperwhites, pepper berries, and greenery complement the look without overpowering the table. Simple white unscented taper candles add ambience without interfering with the aromas of good food and wine.

—BARCLAY BUTERA



PHOTOS BY ELIZABETH LAVIN (TOP LEFT), BRITTANY AMBRIDGE (TOP CENTER), SARAH DORIO (TOP RIGHT), RYAN GARVIN (BOTTOM RIGHT), AND LAUREY W. GLENN (BOTTOM LEFT)

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*What is your
 go-to holiday dish?*



CHARLOTTE MOSS I serve traditional Southern fare that reminds me of my childhood holidays in Virginia. For my annual Christmas luncheon in New York, we'll have a Smithfield ham with Cumberland sauce, crab cakes, and a coconut cake or some kind of sweet "surprise." There are more clean plates than you can imagine for a group of girls!



On Christmas Day, we open gifts then feast on a big brunch of egg-and-sausage casserole, my husband's favorite pecan strudel, and Grandmother Sistee's foolproof recipe for beef tenderloin. I set the table before we leave for church the night before, pulling out my red-and-green holly-print tablecloth, 1950s red glass plates, and holiday juice glasses.

—CHESIE BREEN ✂



JOHN MARSHALL WATSON

I turn on the "Lessons and Carols" service from the King's College choir in Cambridge and open my worn copy of Mastering the Art of French Cooking by Julia Child for the most complicated chocolate mousse recipe you can find! It's not about saving time—it's about savoring the moments spent assembling a magnificent recipe step by step.

We spend the holidays at the chalet in Switzerland, so I like for the menu to be authentic. Fondue is always fun for a casual family meal, while stuffed roasted chicken with chestnuts and risotto is a go-to for more formal dinners. And don't forget the spiced wine! My table is layered with Suzani tablecloths, Indian palampores, 18th-century Spanish pottery, and Swiss etched crystal with mountain scenes. I pile the table with greens from the garden, ruby amaryllis, red roses, and edelweiss. It's sort of a winter wonderland. —MICHELLE NUSSBAUMER



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