



SEASONAL PLATES ADD A FESTIVE TOUCH/EMMA BRIDGEWATER

A table to remember

Christmas dinner may steal the show, but an enchanting table layout will add an extra layer of festive magic. *Words: Anna Paul*

In the rush of planning the big day, the table setting can often get overlooked. Yet, Christmas dinner is at the heart of the celebrations and a beautifully curated table sets a celebratory tone.

FIRST, PICK A THEME

“Start by choosing a colour theme and layer up,” recommends Sara Miller, founder of luxury home and lifestyle brand Sara Miller London. “Think of your table or tablecloth as your background colour, and work upwards, adding placemats, cutlery, plates and name plates. An accent colour can be brought in to lift the theme and add sparkle.”

A theme keeps the setting cohesive and it can be as simple as focusing on a few motifs or colours that feature throughout. For table linen, a midnight blue is an impactful choice, she adds. Deep burgundy and pine green are also beautifully rich, festive choices. Meanwhile, for a pared-back look, a crisp white linen provides a simple base, and your theme can be introduced through placemats and accessories.

MIX OLD AND NEW

“Make the most of the tableware you already have and get creative,” advises luxury events planner and hosting expert Lavinia Stewart-Brown. Christmas is the perfect occasion to bring out your best crystal glasses, dinner plates and family heirlooms. “You may have a set of candlesticks, a vintage

tablecloth or perhaps some napkin rings that have been passed down. These are your treasures. Use them,” agrees Harriet Webber Jamieson, managing director of prestigious events planner Party Planners.

Harriet adds, “The perfect table should feel effortlessly assembled, layered with warmth, texture and memory.” That doesn’t mean you can’t buy some new pieces; it’s all about mixing old and new in a directional way.

If you do want to invest in some new pieces, think of them as heirlooms, ensuring they complement your existing decor and theme. Emma Bridgewater has an array of beautiful festive pieces, including the Rosehip & Ivy 10½ inch plate (£28) and the Holly 8½ inch plate (£25). For timeless options, consider Fortnum & Mason’s Holly Robin Placemats (£120 for four) or the Culinary Concepts Stag Champagne Bath (£250), a striking piece that you can proudly pass on through generations.

Or, for a less traditional choice, Sara Miller’s Woodland Tales range, features designs with opulent gold detailing, such as the Woodland Tales Cake Plates (£50 for four).

LOW EFFORT, HIGH IMPACT

With the table set, move on to the centrepiece. For a striking piece that impresses but requires minimal effort, “run a long garland of foliage down the centre of the table and layer in items you already have at

home, like baubles, tree picks and seasonal fruit such as pomegranates,” advises Whinnie Williams, TV presenter and interior designer and trends forecaster for Balsam Hill. Forage your own or splurge on the Outdoor Cedar Woods Foliage Garland (£258 for two).

“The key is to mix different textures, shapes and sizes,” advises Sara. “Round pine cones contrast beautifully with straight twigs, and greenery brings another colour to your Christmas table, hinting at frosty forests.”

FINESSE THE DETAILS

Once the centrepiece is in place, it’s time for the final flourishes. “Personalised name settings are a thoughtful and elegant way to ensure each guest feels the Christmas spirit,” advises Sara. Make handwritten cards and mini bouquets inspired by your centrepiece and style napkins with velvet bows for a charming final touch. The White Company’s Claret Velvet Napkin Bows (£15 for six) are a timeless addition.

Finally, don’t forget ambient touches, like lighting and music. “If it’s safe to do so, plenty of candles add a beautiful, softly lit glow and automatically give the space a warm, inviting feel,” advises Lavinia.

Ultimately, think about the atmosphere you want to create and not just how the table looks, adds Harriet. “Guests will remember how the table made them feel.”

We’ll drink to that.

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