

SUNDAY

INSIDE

Your brilliant 12-page
'Travel on Sunday' pull-out



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▼ Alice Naylor-Leyland says her style is 'bucolic with a touch of whimsy'



ANDREW CROWLEY FOR THE TELEGRAPH

How the pros plan the perfect garden party

Over-the-top tablescaping, blousy blooms and festoon lighting... take inspiration from the tastemakers and turn your gathering into an event. By Madeleine Howell

Rejoice! 'Tis the season of the great British garden party. Groups of up to 30 are now allowed to gather and socialise outdoors, including in private gardens. So, how to impress your guests in 2021, and ensure they have an agreeable, Insta-worthy time? To inspire your next garden gathering, we asked aesthetes, party planners, styling experts and good-living gurus how they host their own friends and families in their gardens at home.

Read on for their tips, tricks and cunning ideas for stylish, al-fresco fun, from kombucha cocktails to ditsy print linen and blooming centrepieces. After all, as Julia Childs once said, a party without a cake is just a meeting.

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A style guide to the *outside*

Industry expert and founder of Out and Out Original, Daniel Fairburn, brings you this season's best deals on designer furniture. Visit www.outandout.com or call 02037 728 752 for more exciting deals and discounts.

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Give your garden a modern and stylish upgrade this year with the Lisbon Garden Lounge set. It seats 5 people in comfort and comes in charcoal grey. It includes a comfy 3-seater sofa, 2 spacious armchairs and a rectangular slatted coffee table. The cushions are made from poly spun fabric and have removable covers for washing. The frame of the lounge set and coffee table is electrostatically coated aluminium to give a durable and sleek finish. Normally £1299, now available at an amazing £899*, but only when you quote your £400 discount code **TELMAY21** at checkout.



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Chesterton - Corner Rattan Set

The luxurious Chesterton corner sofa and matching glass-topped coffee table set is perfect for entertaining outdoors. Generously proportioned with deep, comfortable cushions you can seat 5 people with ease. It's so easy to look after – the seat and back cushions all feature removable covers (see website). With a maintenance-free construction of thick polyrattan and a galvanised steel frame, the set can even be left out all-year round. Normally £799, now available at an amazing £699*, but only when you quote your £100 discount code **TELMAY21A** at checkout.

To receive your discount on any of these products quote code at checkout at www.outandout.com or call 02037 728 752 before 20.06.2021. *Excludes delivery. Prices correct at time of going to press.

Cover Story



LIZ EARLE

Entrepreneur and mother-of-five Liz Earle MBE is the founder of the Liz Earle Wellbeing magazine and podcast. Known for her feel-good lifestyle, she lives on her 350-acre organic farm in the West Country with her husband, Patrick Drummond

The setting at home on our farm in West Dorset is laid-back. I like gatherings that start in the early evening and evolve into stargazing around an open table. We have an old teak table on a flagstone terrace, and hay bales covered with colourful Kenyan blankets (we have a family home in Kenya) set around a fire basket. I also have a shepherd's hut with twinkly lights and lanterns and a treehouse with lights strung around it. I'm a big fan of using fairy lights, jam-jar candles and candles in hurricane lamps for a soft glow.

I like to allow garden blooms to take centre stage (rather than focusing on perfect plates and matching cutlery), running a long line of single-stem scented roses down the middle of a long table. In a motley collection of small glass vases or jam jars. It's easy, but looks striking. I sometimes add the odd sprig of mint or rosemary to the jars for fragrance.

I'm pretty much in charge, but my five children like to stoke the fire pit, look after the barbecue or arrange the flowers. I'm fortunate to have had most of my children home during the lockdowns, but I'm looking forward to hosting my parents, who are in their 80s, and my brother and sister-in-law with their two boys. We've missed having them over for farm football and late-night guitar playing.

My ex-husband is a polo player and we have a long-standing tradition of hosting an annual *asado* or Argentinian barbecue during polo season, cooking a whole lamb over a fire pit, served on ciabatta rolls with chimichurri sauce, made with lots of fresh



▲ Flower show: 'I like to allow garden blooms to take centre stage,' says Liz



▲ Liz Earle and guests chat around the fire pit at her home in the West Country

parsley with olive oil, garlic, salt and pepper. This summer, I'll do a scaled-down version with local lamb chops. I make big, colourful bowls of salad, too – a favourite is finely chopped raw broccoli, red peppers and apples with a cider vinegar and extra virgin olive oil dressing, freshly squeezed lemon juice and toasted pine nuts.

A popular tipple is a berry and mint gin kombucha for a burst of summer flavour. For one tall glass, take a handful of berries – strawberries, raspberries, blackcurrants, whatever you have (it's fine to use frozen berries). Put them into the bottom of a jug and mash together with a fork. Add one shot of gin, chopped mint, and top up with 100ml of kombucha, home-made or shop-bought. I've collaborated on a new organic Rose Blush kombucha with Mighty Brew, which is perfect. Stir well, and serve with plenty of ice.

To keep children entertained, a small pop-up tent makes a great den (and sunshade), and a treasure hunt is always good. I recently bought a basketball hoop. If it's a night-time gathering and you're lucky enough to have a big enough garden, it's got to be a game of spotlight – hide and seek in the pitch dark with the seeker wearing a head-torch and lots of screaming involved. The more who are willing to play, the merrier.

Remember, people come for good company over a plate of food, not perfection. Take a moment to breathe, take it all in, and cherish it. It's rare these days to get friends and family together and easy to work so hard at making it perfect for everyone that you forget to enjoy it yourself.

So, don't rush to wash up. Just sit a while longer and enjoy the noisy chatter and company around you.

Visit lizearlewellbeing.com for more recipes and entertaining ideas

SHOP IT

Five of the best on-trend wicker and rattan chairs for al-fresco apéritifs



Rinum synthetic wicker armchair, £224.95 sklum.com/uk



Bistro by Ceraudo "Madeleine" chair in raspberry, £220 ceraudo.com



Beliani green "acapulco" rattan accent chair, £179.99 beliam.co.uk



Rattan vintage "peacock" armchair, £194 maisonsdumonde.co



Rattan indoor/outdoor bistro chair, £178 anthropologie.com



Fiona Leahy wears a dress by LoveShack Fancy (loveshackfancy.com)

TOP TIPS FOR ENTERTAINING

Three Instagram accounts to follow for garden-party styling inspiration



@maisonmargauxLtd Maison Margaux is a luxury British homeware brand selling beautiful linens, tableware, candles, cutlery, glassware and accessories



@willowcrossleycreates Stylist and florist Willow Crossley is inspired by an artistic eye and inspired by a life spent immersed in nature



@matildagoad Designer and creative consultant Matilda Goad creates visually beautiful spaces with attention to detail and unusual decorative objects to elevate the home and garden

supposed to be perfect or pristine. Wicker placemats and Falcon enamelware are both durable and pretty. But it's so easy to buy a few metres of material online or on Berwick Street's haberdashery shops and make your own tablecloths and napkins.

Beautiful but utilitarian features, like chinoiserie ice buckets and ceramic Sicilian Moor's head flower pots, which I collect, draw the eye. I have festoon lighting, and really like multi-coloured Murano and vintage candlesticks and tea lights, but they have to be sheltered from the wind. You just can't have naked candle flames outside.

My boyfriend is a photographer and artist and has got really involved with tablescaping with me. He sees it as a crazy domestic art form. It's a fun thing to do together and get your guests involved with.

I put dahlias and coral-charm peonies in green bottles, and I love fans for decoration and in case it gets hot – they are a fun thing to have on the table. Glass paperweights to stop place settings and paper menus from blowing away. Using clear-glass plates with menus underneath is a good trick, and clear-glass plates are also perfect if you don't want to detract from the print of your tablecloth.



Coloured shawls are a great thing to have draped on the back of chairs, and guests can use them to protect their shoulders from the sun or to keep warm.

My pink and candy-striped tablecloth from Summerrill and Bishop

(summerillandbishop.com), left, is a joy paired with white Oka plates and clear wine glasses (oka.com) and LaDoubleJ pink and green bowls (ladoublej.com). I've styled it here with my own Fiona Leahy Design pink-edge Murano candlestick hurricane vases and bud vases, and pink marbled resin glasses by Dinosaur Designs (dinosaurdesigns.co.uk). The flowers are by Scarlet and Violet, supplemented by my garden flowers, and the green bistro chairs are from Ceraudo (ceraudo.com). I love the combination of pink and green.

My garden is small, but I use it as much as I can, and I probably have more garden chairs than I have square feet, including a big outdoor swing with a canopy of roses above it.

The visuals are important, but so is food and energy. We have a Big Green Egg barbecue and we love to grill fresh fish, bread and peaches.

I have a trusty old-school Block Rocker Sport ghetto blaster on wheels for music in all weathers. It's one of the best things I've ever bought for outdoor entertaining and al-fresco discos. I play everything from Blossom Dearie to the Beach Boys and the Eagles.

fiona Leahy.com

SHOP IT

Four of the best woven accessories for outdoor entertaining



Duchess & Butle set of four water hyacinth placemats, £87 notonthehighstreet.com



"Clara" wide-brim straw hat, £69 to.ast



Seagrass woven bottle holder, £25 thewhitecompany.com



Palm leaf fan, £9 designerintinge.co.uk

ALICE NAYLOR-LEYLAND

'Insta-artist' and Vogue contributor Alice Naylor-Leyland, founder of Mrs Alice tableware and homeware, lives in Cambridgeshire with her husband Tom Naylor-Leyland (son and heir of Sir Philip Naylor-Leyland, 4th Baronet) and their three children Billy, Nancy, and Felix

I long to be outside, whatever the weather, with a long serving table laid out in the shade under a tree or under parasols. Guests can drift around among separated circular tables, and help themselves from big bowls piled high with pastas and salads. I always fill the middles of tables with flowers, and I'm mad about peonies and poppies. Amanda Brooks of Cutter Brooks (cutterbrook.co.uk) also does the most lovely flowers made of paper. They're wacky, but you can reuse them over and over.

My style is bucolic with a touch of whimsy, in keeping with the English countryside: our garden in Cambridgeshire slopes down to a river, so it's a bit *The Wind in the Willows*. I've been bringing indoor furniture and homeware out into the outdoors for a homely feel, and having a bit of fun with my outdoor chairs, designing blue gingham ruffled seat-pad cushions and table linen to match, for extra texture and layer.

Just because you're outside doesn't mean you can't play around with soft furnishings. You can go maximalist or minimalist with your table laying – there's no right or wrong – but the key to setting a beautiful al-fresco table is always to lay it before your guests arrive. Otherwise, you will be running



▲ 'The key to setting a beautiful al-fresco table is laying it before your guests arrive'



around all day like a headless chicken. The food is very much my husband's domain. He's a big foodie and organises food festivals up in Malton in Yorkshire. When I cook, I keep it simple. I hate that thing of still cooking when friends arrive.

This summer, we'll be hosting friends we might not have seen for over a year, and we like the kids to entertain themselves and run around in the garden and make dens. I don't often go to restaurants. Hosting at home is part of our lifestyle in the countryside – it's what we've done for years, and it's heaven.

As night falls, I set hurricane lanterns on the table and also spread them around it on the floor, boxing it in with a carpet of lights. Of course, in this country, you're only going to host outside if you've checked the weather forecast. If there's likely to be a passing shower, I always have umbrellas and blankets to hand. If there's a 10 per cent chance of rain, just do it – we don't really have any other option!

mrsalice.com

SHOP IT

Our top buys for stylish al-fresco entertaining



Coco & Wolf cotton wavy edged tablecloth handmade in Somerset, £120 libertylondon.com



Barebones Living railroad steel lantern in antique bronze, £80 bearandbear.com



Matilda Goad tartan squiggle jug in yellow, £75 matildagoad.com



Falcon yellow tumbler, £7 falconenameware.com

SOPHIE CONRAN

Interior designer, writer and mother-of-two Sophie Conran is the daughter of Habitat founder Sir Terence Conran. The founder of the Sophie Conran Shop, a homeware collection bringing joy into the everyday (including her Sophie Conran for Portmeirion dinnerware), she splits her time between London and Wiltshire with her husband, Nick Hofgren



spill something. Thyme, a hotel, restaurant and spa in the Cotswolds, has a fantastic shop for tablecloths (thyme.co.uk), and there's a great antique shop called Top Banana in Tetbury for antique cutlery, glassware and ceramics (topbananaantiques.com).

Even like to have fireworks or live music if it's a special occasion, like a birthday party or an anniversary. We had my daughter Coco's wedding here, which was heaven. Once, we had an evening garden party where we all got very dressed up, which I'd like to do again. I've just got a greenhouse. We're looking forward to hosting in there even when the weather isn't great. I'm not to be deterred...

I serve lots of seasonal dishes, because I've got lots of lovely things growing in the garden. I've got rhubarb, chard and spinach at the moment, and the artichokes are com-

ing along. A favourite is spinach-and-ricotta pie with filo pastry, or roast chicken with tarragon mayonnaise, grilled summer vegetables and big green salads. To drink, I do homemade pink lemonade with crushed raspberries. Prosecco with Campari and perhaps blood-orange juice is very nice, and vodka, elderflower and sparkling water with a squeeze of lime goes down well.

I've also got lots of straw hats, fans and a basket of sun lotion in case it gets too hot.

If I could, I'd host outside and create a garden party atmosphere all the time. When my children were little, I'd always have a picnic basket packed with cutlery and a frisbee. Garden games are important for children, so we've got a badminton net. I tried to get a croquet set last year, but they'd all sold out. Our lurcher, Mouse, is always tearing around like a lunatic, and whenever other dogs come to visit she takes them swimming in the pond.

It's good to team up, so you're not stuck in the kitchen, and to prepare as much as you can beforehand. My daughter is very good at desserts, so we'll often make a cake or tart together in advance. I like to make every occasion a special occasion, but this year, I'll appreciate garden parties more than ever.

sophieconran.com

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