

HOME EDITION

DRESS TO IMPRESS

Talking tables

Whether it's a simple meal or a festive feast fit for a king, make your table the focal point this Christmas. Angelina Villa-Clarke discovers the best tips for tablescaping

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or many of us, the festive period is all about connecting with family and friends for fun days and indulgent feasting. Gathering to eat together is an integral part of this time of year, and by artfully dressing and decorating the dining table, every meal can be elevated to a special occasion.

Whether you want to keep it simple and elegant or opt for something elaborate, the art of tablescaping can adapt to every style. The main event is the Christmas Day meal, of course, and creating an enchanting table for the occasion will add to all the special memories made on the big day.

The art of tablescaping dates back hundreds of years to the 18th century, when the aristocracy would routinely create fantastical creations at their tables. It's a tradition seeing a resurgence in popularity, with John Lewis reporting a rise in searches for tableware, cocktail glasses and party accessories. The high-street store has an enormous range of Christmas-themed dining accessories in stock this year, such as mistletoe-printed crockery, etched glassware and claret-coloured dishes.

For a traditional look, opt for a red or green tablecloth and mix-match napkins in festive hues. A tartan fabric or seasonal printed cloth can also work for a cheerful and timeless aesthetic. Tablecloths, napkins and placemats by Catherine Jane Designs are made with textiles that feature hand-drawn illustrations, inspired by nature found in the UK. If you have a beautiful table, on the other hand, don't cover it up. Instead, showcase it with a pretty runner and add a wreath or small vase of seasonal flowers as the centrepiece.

Lighting is an easy way to create the perfect ambiance – layer candles or fairy lights in jars and switch on table lamps for a magic effect. “Lighting is so important in creating the perfect festive mood – especially when it comes to ➤

HOMEGROWN
Both Neptune (left)
and Catherine Jane
Designs (below) have a
focus on British styles



GREEN AND GOLD John Lewis' Christmas line runs the gamut, from tree ornaments to decorative flourishes

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INSPIRED BY NATURE

Annie Sloan CBE, paint and colour expert, reveals how to get creative this year

1. Sage green is a gentle shade with a calming energy and, at Christmas, pairs wonderfully with natural foliage.
2. Try applying gilding wax to the edges of branches and leaves for an extra magical touch.
3. Use leftover fabric to make handmade napkins and placemats.



LIGHT UP YOUR CHRISTMAS
Talking Tables (inset) and Rockett St George (below left) are full of classy touches; Abbeygate Lighting (below right) has festive illuminations



the Christmas table,” agrees Abbeygate Lighting, which has a showroom in Bury St Edmunds. “Dim the lights for more of an atmospheric mood and light candles to add to the effect. You can also add a few small, touch-operated table lamps along the length of the table for a sophisticated, restaurant-style finish. Here at Abbeygate Lighting, we have a large selection of lighting solutions to create just the right festive feeling.”

Stylish crackers could add a fresh pop of colour to an otherwise pared-back scheme. Talking Tables, Rockett St George and Petra & Co are all great sources for artisanal additions which will add sparkle to any setting, while Nancy & Betty Studio offers handcrafted crackers made in England. “Our crackers are made from sustainable paper stock, printed with vegetable-based ink, with one tree planted for every box bought, and contain plastic-free gifts,” says the brand. “This year, the elves have been hard at work creating ➡



OFF WITH A BANG Nancy & Betty Studio has some sustainable crackers on the menu, filled with plastic-free winnings (left). Petra & Co's marbled green crackers are also handmade, eco-friendly options (above)



four new designs inspired by the foliage, fauna and feathered friends found in the orchard surrounding the Kent workshop.”

Inspired by a wintry landscape, a nature-themed table is one of the easiest to create. You can bring the outdoors in by using green foliage and dried orange slices. Dress each plate with cinnamon sticks tied with ribbons or add a tabletop Christmas tree as a focal point, like those from Leaf Envy. Or fill glass bonbon jars, like those available at Solavia Glassware, with berries and twigs for a striking seasonal display.

The trend is highlighted at Matalan, where its Magic Forest collection includes decorations that capture the wildness of a magical forest, lanterns decorated with foliage and bright berry garlands.

“The dinner table is always the focus of the big day,” explains Reeds Homestore, based in Ely and Downham Market. “One idea is to keep the look simple by using nature’s produce: decorate with sprigs of fir, pinecones and cinnamon sticks, for instance. Another is to light the table with candles: use different-size candlesticks for a dramatic effect. Mix and match textiles with patterned and plain tablecloths,



runners and napkins. At Reeds Homestore, our selection of tableware and glasses will elevate your table for the perfect feast.”

For a stylish look, Neptune’s festive collection includes handblown cocktail glasses and fine bone china through to linen napkins and beautiful extending tables. Aalish Yorke-Long, CEO of Neptune, reveals: “This season, our focus is on the beauty of natural materials and timeless British design. We have created a line of pieces designed to last and be enjoyed year after year. Our collection offers layers of rich materiality and natural textures that will provide comfort in our homes.”

Finally, for a touch of pizzazz, curate an opulent look with tones of silver, pink, pale blue and gold. Layer beaded placemats, gilded plates and jewel-coloured glasses for a maximalist feel. Dunelm has a wide collection of glamorous additions, such as lustre glassware, star-shaped charger plates and stag gold napkin rings.

“To create a beautiful Christmas table, the secret is to layer with crockery, candles and decorations,” states Glasswells, East Anglia’s largest independent store. “At Glasswells, we have a wide selection to choose from – whether it is Sophie Allport’s Holly and Berry range dinnerware, festive tablecloths or champagne flutes. For real festive flair, scatter bright tree decorations along the table, turn the lights down low, illuminate the room with candles and elevate the table with napkins tied with ribbons and sprigs of mistletoe.” ●



SETTING THE SCENE Leaf Envy’s pint-sized Christmas trees make for a great centrepiece (top left); Matalan’s sweet Candy Cane Lane trend (left); Neptune’s eclectic offerings (right)



TO TOP IT OFF Glasswells stocks a host of top brands who each produce fantastic festive homewares (above). Solavia Glassware recommends a fragrant display (left)



STOCKISTS

Abbeygate Lighting

01394 288240 | abbeygatelighting.co.uk

Annie Sloan

01865 803 168 | anniesloan.com

Catherine Jane Designs

catherinejanedesigns.co.uk

Dunelm

dunelm.com

Glasswells

01284 752804 | glasswells.co.uk

John Lewis

0345 610 0344 | johnlewis.com

Leaf Envy

leafenvy.co.uk

Matalan

matalan.co.uk

Nancy & Betty Studio

01227 696028 | nancyandbetty.com

Neptune

01223 643535 | neptune.com

Petra & Co

petraco.co.uk

Reeds Homestore

01366 382213 | reedshomestore.co.uk

Rockett St George

01444 253391 | rockettstgeorge.co.uk

Solavia Glassware

01926 632843 | solavia.co.uk

Sophie Allport

01778 560256 | sophieallport.com

Talking Tables

020 7627 6767 | talkingtables.co.uk

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Robin napkins
£19 for four, sophieallport.co.uk

Red berries garland
£19, matalan.co.uk

Silver tree snow globe place cards
£11.99 for four, gingerray.co.uk

Marble Christmas crackers
£20 for six, talkingtables.co.uk

Boho glass candlestick
£14, thewisteriatree.co.uk

Set the scene

Stylish accessories to add flair to your Christmas dinner table

Damson scalloped tray
£20, johnlewis.com

Christmas jute placemats
£49 for six, braided-rug.co.uk

Pear platter
£158, rebeccadall.com

Christmas candle votives
£54 for four, ellajames.co.uk

Red wine honeycomb Christmas trees
£19 for three, rockettstgeorge.co.uk