

Rethink Your Scheme

A zingy burst of blue freshens up the traditional red-and-green palette.



ALL SET

Down to the Details

Houston designer Jessica Pearsall brings top-notch cheer to a trio of well-dressed tables

“WHENEVER WE HAD people over, I would always make a point of creating a beautiful atmosphere,” says Jessica Pearsall of her early forays into hosting. “I wanted everyone to feel like they had an experience when they came to my house.” An interior designer by trade, she realized quickly that she had a gift for setting a spectacular table and that others were interested in learning how to do the same. So she launched Ivory and Noire, an online entertaining resource that also offers in-person workshops.

Pearsall’s guiding ethos is simple: Pay attention to the small

stuff. “Besides your effort to make your home look nice, it’s all the little additions, like the posy of flowers on a plate or a handwritten place card, that help it feel very personal,” she says. “Those are what make people think, ‘Wow. She considered everything and really cares about me!’” There’s no better time for these details than during the holidays, notes the entertaining pro. “They give us the opportunity to connect and come together.” Here, Pearsall applies her thoughtful approach to the season, arranging three tablescapes that’ll appeal to any kind of host.

SPIN UP A CLASSIC

“I love to use a mix of old and new pieces,” says the designer of her formula for place settings. She started with a D’Ascoli tablecloth from The Avenue by Lyndsey Zorich. “It feels Christmassy but could be used any time of year,” she notes. Taking cues from its cheery blue stripes, she selected Herend dessert plates and vintage milk glass goblets. Tortoiseshell flatware, wicker place mats, and rattan-wrapped tumblers keep the display approachable. “It’s about adding whimsy to something that could have been stuffy,” she says.



THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Name cards (with calligraphy by J.Noel Design) and berry sprigs secured to napkins with luxe velvet ribbon make the table feel celebratory.

Credits: Dinner plate; pickardchina.com. Place mat; cabana magazine.com. Vintage goblet; ruedeflorence design.etsy.com

STYLING: BUFFY HARGETT MILLER



THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Gold party crackers double as place cards, inviting guests to find their seats and have some fun. Rather than penning each name, Pearsall ordered wooden cutouts from Post-Studio Projects and attached one for every setting.

Credits: Charger; replacements.com. Dinner plate; arteitalica.com. Napkin; joanna.buchanan.com. Monogram; inspiringembroidery.etsy.com

ETHEREAL WHITES

The host leaned into a blend of textures to liven up this monochromatic palette, which finds its anchor in a block-printed white-and-gold tablecloth from Katherine Young Home. “I wanted to create a sense of softness,” notes Pearsall, who topped each feathered place mat with a duo of white plates featuring lacelike designs and an embroidered napkin tied with satin ribbon. The delicate flowers (including anemones, tulips, and paperwhites) underscore the setting’s sweetness, preventing the white-on-white scheme from feeling stark or cold.



ARTFUL AND COLLECTED

For this setting, Pearsall reimagined old-faithful holiday reds, layering in bold linens and gold elements for a sparkling scene that steers clear of candy cane cutesiness. She wrapped the table in Schumacher's Castanet Embroidery fabric and echoed its handmade feel with wooden chargers that she painted herself. "If you can't find something that's exactly what you want but can get close, don't be afraid to tweak it," says the designer. Indian metal cups, dainty French glassware, and a vibrant arrangement of citrus, cut amaryllis, cappuccino roses, and textured greenery round out the artisan-inspired look.



Jessica Pearsall



THE PERSONAL TOUCH

Instead of waiting until people are leaving to give out favors, Pearsall sets a small gift box at each spot. With sprigs of greenery and glitzy ribbons, these presents are part of the decor.

Credits: Dinner plate; mottahedeh.com. Salad plate; ballarddesigns.com. Napkin; shopcblifestyle.com