



“MAKE OVER MY HOLIDAY TABLE!”

FEEDING A THANKSGIVING CROWD IS NO PROBLEM FOR READER MARTHA DRAPER ODELL, BUT SHE'S BEEN USING THE SAME DISHES, GLASSES, AND LINENS FOR A DECADE. O HELPS HER TWEAK TRADITION WITHOUT BREAKING THE BANK...OR A SWEAT.

A GRAND PLAN: “Just as you would dress up for a special function, a stylish setting is important in orchestrating an unforgettable affair,” says Jung Lee, cofounder of the event planning firm Fête in New York City. To create Martha Draper Odell’s new look, Lee started with Odell’s family china, a gilt-edged porcelain dinner service from the 1920s. Then Lee and Odell rounded up decorative objects from around her house. “Always shop your home first,” says Lee. (But don’t go overboard with knickknacks, she warns; they can clutter the table.) Silver and gold accents work because “they’re both used in measured doses,” says Lee. “None of it overwhelms.” The arrangement is also user-friendly: A long, low centerpiece, short candles, and plenty of elbow room let guests talk and dine with ease. Lee came up with several suggestions, shown here and on the next page, for staging a memorable feast.

▶ **DESIGNING WOMEN:**

When the guest list went past 20, Odell (near right) would set up extra tables in her living and family rooms: "It felt like there were several parties going on." Lee's fix: two long tables in a T shape.



HARVEST SEASONING: To break out of the orange/red/brown rut that dominated Odell's old centerpieces and table linens, Lee expanded her repertoire of fall colors to include the rich greens and purples of harvest time—in this case, grapes, pears, apples, and figs. Fruit is an inexpensive alternative to floral arrangements and can be just as vibrant. Lee's other ideas for a focal point: dishes of nuts, pillar candles nestled in a bowl of cranberries, or a pile of albino pumpkins.



REPURPOSED ELEGANCE: Lee is a big proponent of using what you've got—something Odell values as well. "I like that my mother sits down to see her own mother's china," she says. Lee turned glass votive holders into saltcellars for an instant table upgrade; the reverse side of unused business cards shows guests their places. A runner made of scattered lemon leaves is unexpected, affordable, and lush. Or try sprigs of aromatic rosemary and thyme. "The real thing is always more beautiful than the artificial," says Lee.



FINE DINING: Establish a color theme, and stick with it. For example, the seedpod paperweight picks up the gold rim of a plate; a bowl of allium blooms echoes the burgundy tablecloth and the plate's green accent stripe. This table setting makes a subtle statement because it emphasizes muted tones and restraint—no paper Pilgrims in sight. Calla lilies and a lady-slipper orchid with feathers for leaves lend texture and interest. Odell is inspired by Lee's fuss-free approach to glamor: "Jung showed me how to make everyone feel like he's got the best seat in the house."