

48009 OCT/NOV 2008

Signature

Celebrating Birmingham
and Bloomfield Life

FIRE UP IN THE KITCHEN

Festive Fall
Recipes From
Birmingham Chefs

**SPICE-INFUSED
FASHION**

A Well-Dressed
Holiday Table

PLUS

COLE STREET: BIRMINGHAM'S SOHO
ITALIAN FARMHOUSE IN BLOOMFIELD

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Carolyn Hefner of *The China Closet* in Birmingham created this modern table with florist David McKnight. His architecturally inspired centerpiece features artfully placed collections of mirrors, and square vases in varying shapes and heights filled with flowers in harvest colors. Silver chargers add an elegant touch. A custom invitation by Hefner's graphic artist *Cartoleria* sets the tone for the dinner party with the same leaf detail as on the placecards.



a FEAST for your EYES

TIPS FOR YOUR HOLIDAY TABLE

By Claire Charlton Photos by Daniel Lippitt

Making guests feel special starts long before dinner is served. It starts with the invitation, which Carolyn Hefner, event planner and owner of The China Closet in Birmingham, recommends sending no matter what kind of party you are hosting.

A custom invitation sets the tone for what guests can expect, and shows you put time and thought into having them over, Hefner says, adding that the same goes for the front door, which will greet visitors first, and should be decorated to feel warm and inviting.

A well-dressed table is key to the dining experience, Hefner says. It should have thoughtful touches, which reflect your unique personality and guests, she says.

Hefner suggests starting with exquisite table linens, which can be purchased from A Touch of Lace in Bloomfield Township (prices start at about \$100, plus \$21 and up for monogramming). Then add color with charger plates of red leather or amber-stained wood, which can be rented through The China Closet (\$6).

Indulge your guests with individual placecards, each inscribed with Thanksgiving or other fun trivia they can share during dinner. Go traditional by setting each place with every possible piece of silverware, and teach the children (and the adults!) which fork to use with each course, following suggestions from *Emily Post's Etiquette* from Borders (\$39.95).

Delight everyone with an elaborately wrapped gift at each place, such as a whimsical animal-shaped wine-bottle stopper from Watch Hill Home Interiors in Birmingham (\$6-\$15), or Christopher Radko miniature Christmas ornaments gift wrapped from Ribbons in Birmingham (\$16-\$36). Cure the kids' fidgeting with Automoblox wooden cars with interchangeable parts from Adventures in Toys in Birmingham (\$9.95-\$37.95).

Toast loved ones with special Waterford crystal champagne flutes in the traditional Lismore pattern from Greenstone's in Birmingham (\$150 per pair). Serve pumpkin pie on dessert plates adorned with each guest's initial from Anthropologie in Birmingham (\$8). When dinner is over, pile each plate with leaf-shaped sugar cookies – a perfect take-home gift for each guest. ☐

Create a dinner menu, such as this one by The China Closet's Cartoleria, as a preview to your guests' dining experience.



This traditional table by Hefner plays up the harvest theme with such details as a gold tablecloth and apple candles placed atop each setting as gifts for guests. The centerpiece by florist Ralph Bellisario brims with fall blooms and clusters of grapes.

