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cosmo life at your place

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FESTIVE DECOR

Everyone decorates their living room, but your place will feel extrafestive if you pay attention to forgotten spaces, like your entryway or bathroom. Pick up glass-ball ornaments at the dollar store, and pile them in a shallow bowl with the hook part facing downward. Place them on any available shelf or counter.

A cool centerpiece will help you get into a fa-la-lala mood. Down the length of a table, evenly space out votives with candles in them. Then put a pinecone or a few small ones (find them outside or at a craft store) between each votive. The look will be chic and make your table look like a winter wonderland. Hint: Put water in each glass before putting the candle in and the wax won't stick to the bottom.

Supersimple Holiday Tips



Not to be Scroogey, but blowing a load of dough on getting into the spirit sucks the joy out of things. Here are creative tricks that don't sap your time, money, or energy...and keep the season fun and stress-free.

SPECIAL TOUCHES

Make gifts stand out by wrapping them in something other than generic Christmas paper. Using fabric on your presents will look luxe and can be even cheaper than the paper stuff. Swing by your local fabric store, and check out their scraps table—you can find pretty cloth for as cheap as 99 cents a yard. Then wrap your gifts just as if you were using paper.

Trekking to the store, buying cards, getting

stamps—what a pain in the ass! Do something easier, more personal, and slightly high-tech. Shutterfly.com allows you to build your own photo Website and post notes about the pics. Plus, they have lots of pretty templates and fonts so you can really customize it. Pick out your favorite photos from the past year, upload them, and write a little holiday message to all your friends and family. Then send the link to everyone you love.

Brilliant Bites



It's the fancy little details guests really notice, so instead of serving dips in normal bowls, do something a bit funky that people will gush over. Cut the tops off red and yellow peppers, and hollow them out. Then set them on a large, pretty plate, fill them with store-bought dip (bean, hummus, or onion, for example), and arrange crackers and veggies around them.



Popcorn is cheap, and it's easy to make tons of it. But serving it plain is boring and expected—you have to jazz it up for the holidays. Try this sauce from Maneet Chauhan of Vermilion restaurant in New York City: Melt 2 T butter in a pan, add ½ t salt, ¼ t cayenne, ¼ t ginger powder, and 2 T lemon juice. Heat till it gets bubbly. Pour over a bowl of popcorn, add ¼ c mixed nuts, and toss everything together. Serve it up in a big punch bowl, then set out brightly colored paper cups so guests can help themselves to a scoop to eat as they socialize.

Rather than spend lots of cash on different liquors to stock your bar, make a signature cocktail, and put it in a pitcher for your get-together. Try this seasonal sangria from Coppa d'Oro restaurant, in Santa Monica, California: Mix together 4 oz Partida Blanco tequila, 6 oz St-Germain liqueur, 1 bottle prosecco, 10 clementine wedges, and 10 kw slices. Pour it so that everyone gets some fruit in their drink.



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