

# SPECIAL REPORT: HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

> GET PREPPED

## Fine-tune your decor to entertain

Raid the attic, stick to a theme and acquire pieces you can use year-round, say design experts

**ANDREA JANUS**  
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

The holidays are almost upon us, and it's about that time to drag the decorations out of the attic and start making the house look a little more festive.

But to avoid going full-on Clark Griswold, with lights that will strain the local power station and more kitschy bric-a-brac than a dollar store, consider these tips from interior designer William MacDonald of WillMac Design. First things first. "Don't go overboard," he says. "If you think you have too much, you do."

Many people make the mistake of overloading one room, piling up the sideboard, mantelpiece and end tables with decorations.

"Spread the love around the house," MacDonald advises. Even if you're decorating from the same box of ornaments you've had for decades, spread those tchotchkes around the house, including the powder room or the front hall.

The best way to avoid going overboard is to pick a theme, which could be a motif (snowflakes, reindeer) or a colour, and then build your decor around that. Look for inspiration anywhere, even months before Christmas on your summer holiday. MacDonald found a starfish on the East Coast one year, and the following Christmas the star was his holiday motif.

Once you decide on a theme, it isn't necessary to spend a lot of money, MacDonald says. A local park or wooded area, and even the grocery store, are great places to start. Filling large decorative bowls, or even large serving bowls and soup terrines, with seasonal fruits (pomegranates or clementines, for example), nuts or pine cones and branches sprayed with silver or gold paint is an easy way to get a cozy seasonal look without breaking the bank.

"I'm a strong believer in going to your fridge first," MacDonald says.

Otherwise, invest in a good-quality artificial garland to keep in your holiday kit that you can use year after year. Drape it over the mantel, along a staircase or down the middle of your holiday table. You can accessorize it differently every year based on your chosen theme, MacDonald says.

### Party Prep

Once the house is decorated and you're ready to entertain, MacDonald advises bringing in some key items that you will likely reuse throughout the year.

A bar cart will always come in handy at the holidays for smaller parties, and makes for easy entertaining year-round.

But for a larger guest list, use a sideboard or rent a large table and set out all the fixings, MacDonald says.

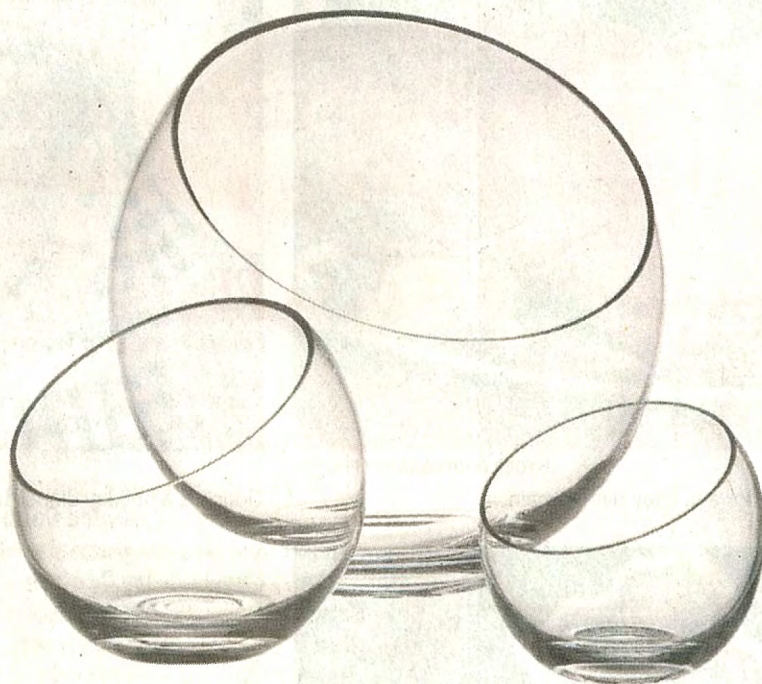
And always be prepared for surprise visitors by having a low-sided basket full of

nuts, candies and cocktail napkins underneath or inside the coffee table.

When friends pop by unexpectedly for a holiday libation, "You just bring that up and put it in on the coffee table and say, 'let me get you a glass of wine,'" MacDon-

ald says. "Just like you were expecting them to pop by."

And always have another basket of toiletries and a set of towels and linens ready for visitors who may not be ready to leave until the next morning.



Tilt bowls, small: \$14.96, medium: \$16.95 and large: \$69.95, Crate & Barrel, crateandbarrel.ca.



Red berry garland, \$69.95, Crate & Barrel, crateandbarrel.ca.



Wood Reindeer Vase, Tall, \$39.50, Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.



Gold Berry Wreath, \$29, Walmart, walmart.ca.



Gold & Ivory Animal Silhouette Pillow, \$39.50, Indigo, chapters.indigo.ca.



7-piece Barware Toolset, \$19.96, Walmart, walmart.ca.