



TERRIFIC TABLETOPS



So many of life's special moments—birthdays, holidays, family gatherings, romantic dinners and everyday meals—happen around the table. Here, we show you simple, elegant tabletop ideas suitable for a casual lunch on the porch or an evening dinner party with friends.

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Exposed tabletops, white plates, votive candles, glass vases and fresh flowers are the basic components of our favorite tabletops.





OPPOSITE: Chunky glass vases found at a garage sale line up to display fresh flowers behind the antique pine table. White cake plates display fresh pears; a large white garden urn is filled with green apples. Old pink and gold Limoges plates are layered with simple white dishes, and orchids are grouped on one side of the table. THIS PAGE: Thin glass vases in varying heights make a zigzag pattern across the table. Each vase holds a single lush green hydrangea. Be creative and substitute your own favorite flower in each vase. For a more contemporary look, arrange the vases in a row across the center of the table.

TABLETOP TIPS

1. Choose a table as large as your space will allow.
2. Have plenty of comfortable seating. Your chairs do not have to match, and benches are a great addition to your table.
3. Invest in a white set of dishes. This crisp look will never go out of style and plates can be mixed with other patterns.
4. Store your flatware in large glass containers and place them on the table as-is for a casual look.
5. Place centerpieces at the end of the table so guests are able to see each other and converse easily.
6. Impress your guests by presenting them with their own pressed glass bud vase. Pressed glass is a great alternative to crystal and offers a luxe look for minimal investment.
7. Create a glow with plenty of candlelight.
8. Place a handwritten menu card at each place setting.
9. You can never go wrong with fresh flowers. Check out your local flower markets, farmers' markets, nurseries and your own home garden.
10. Making everyone feel at home is the finest luxury of all!



THIS PAGE: Mix elegance with informality. Blue Spode china mingles with basic white. The tureen displays fresh green grass; a moss-filled teacup graces the top of each place setting. Blue goblets reflect the flickering light of the votive candles. OPPOSITE: This cozy-cottage look calls for a collection of white ironstone, fresh flowers, natural linen napkins and miniature blackboard name tags. The name tags are repurposed Christmas ornaments; we love the idea of using luggage tags, too.



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