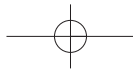


my CHRISTMAS *style*

We all have our own favourite part of the annual preparations in the build-up to Christmas. There's a lot to be done, but when it involves making everything look gorgeous it's not such a trial. *House and Home* drops in on three seasoned festive pros to find out how they create a little Christmas magic in their own homes.

words: **Eimear Nic an Bhaird** photos: **Paul Sherwood**





“ FOR TABLEWARE I ALWAYS USE MY OLD FAVOURITES, THEY COME UP TRUMPS EVERYTIME ”



Judith O'Sullivan ROISIN CROSS SILKS

When I do my Christmas table setting I start with the room and I work from what is there back to the table. In this room it's the silk wallpaper that is the dominant feature in the room, as well as the plantation shutters. We also have a mahogany dining room table with chairs. Dark mahogany and black are prominent in the room so I had to lift those colours and add a seasonal touch. The colours that I chose were diluted aubergine and mauve; the silk inlay is a light aubergine full bodied dupion silk and over that I introduced a layer of silk organza in a light mauve, so that together they picked up on the silk wallpaper. Napkins are also in a dupion silk. The natural fabrics were all nicely linked together. Then the fireplace is marble with a pewter inset so I decided to lift that by introducing silver and metallic grey – as well as being seasonal it also sets off the aubergine nicely and is very complementary. That's what set the tone for the table. I considered covering the chairs with silk, but I thought that was overplaying the theme and it would have been too much, so I left the chairs in black leather.

I deliberately kept the cutlery and delft simple; there is so much elegance in this room, and less is more when you have such elegant features. The glasses are quite ornate, but the cutlery is silver and the delft is white. I looked at all the options and in the end decided to stick to plain white and silver.

The flowers are very important, and I wanted them to be a

little punchy so I spray-painted a lot of witch hazel with a silver spray can. The room still needed more flowers for earthiness – I needed more foliage, since I had taken the plant life out of the witch hazel by spray-painting it! The foliage enhances the hue of the silk wallpaper, and the life of the flowers goes well with the silk on the wall. Because the silk is a natural material I was keen to bring that into the other elements of the table dressing.

I always do a pre-Christmas dinner, and I set the table in my kitchen. I have a walnut floor and olive green walls so I go for white and pewter with a little touch of red. I can be a little more ornate on the table with this room. Last year I had silver and white along with the red, and again I had a heavy Thai silk as a table runner with an inset of organza. By introducing them together you're creating a different hue – silks allow you to introduce any color and they're very adaptable.

I have bought several Edwardian chairs. I go to Buckley's auction in Sandycove every week and I often buy dining chairs there. I French polish them and then go to Blackrock Upholstery to have them covered in a heavy Thai silk. Bringing a vibrancy of Thai colour into a French Edwardian chair creates a stunning effect. I love to mix old and contemporary, formal and informal.

For tableware I always use my old favourites, they come up trumps every time. I like to look and admire other people's tableware all the time, but the ones that I have never let me down. I love them, they're my favourites.

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