

FALL ENTERTAINING

Set the stage for family and friends this season with the help of a few rustic and nature-inspired ideas.

By Mary Kate Hogan

Photography by Andre Baranowski

Styling by Kim Freeman

Food by Chef Antony Ballard

Shot on Location at artist Jeffrey Terreson's studio in Bedford





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he rich tones of autumn can translate into a warm welcome for friends and family when you're hosting a casual gathering or dinner party. A pairing of colorful, modern food with a rustic, nature-inspired table reflects the season in a fresh way.

To set the stage for fall entertaining, we tapped Antony J. Ballard, a personal chef to celebrities (www.chefantonyjballard.com), to plan the menu and stylist Kim Freeman to create a bountiful tablescape. Though our simple supper was staged in an antique carriage house-turned-art studio, you can capture that mood in your own home with these ideas.

Back to Nature

An informal table layered with elements from the outdoors feels approachable to guests. Set the table using finds from your backyard or the farmers' market—leaves, gourds, fruits, and birch logs. The trick is not to worry about perfect symmetry. If you have a rustic wooden table, don't cover it up. Instead, celebrate the irregularities. Here, the runner is draped on a diagonal for visual interest (see page 71). A painting by artist Jeffrey Terreson (www.jterreson.com) inspired our stylist to see the table as a canvas, with brushes of fresh fruits and vegetables here and strokes of leaves, branches, flowers, sprigs of sage, and pheasant feathers there. On a second table, an antique Armenian Kazak rug from Caravan Connection substitutes for linens, bringing bold tones and texture. A loose collection of sunflowers, leaves, and berries in a vase brightens the scene. The food introduces color, too, with beets, a saffron sauce, and red wine picking up the hues of the décor.

Mixed harvest centerpiece For a focal point on a buffet table, line two square glass vases with leaves and fill with potting mix; place decorative cabbages in the dirt, which will be concealed by the leaves (see previous spread). Finish by setting them on a wooden cake platter—to give the arrangement height—and add small gourds and tomatillos around the vases to finish.





Table Dressing

Leaf place cards For a seated dinner, these seasonal mementos mark the table settings in a playful way. To make them, gather pretty leaves in vibrant colors and set them between sheets of wax paper. With a dishtowel on top, iron the leaves, and the wax will transfer, giving them more dimension. Write names on the leaves in pen and set them in beautiful glasses, like these reproduction hobnail glasses from Pier 1 Imports.



Layer plates Square plates on top of round ones add dimension. For a dessert course, place white lace plates on round ones to channel an old-fashioned doily effect. Pumpkin-colored cloth napkins and jeweled napkin rings are from Bedford House.

Log holders Slices of birch logs can work as hot plates, impromptu cutting boards, or serving pieces for loaves of bread. Tie the bread with raffia and add pieces of wheat for harvest ambiance. The birch cuttings are sold at garden centers.





The Menu

"Food is art," says Chef Antony Ballard, "and I created food to complement the art in this studio." Ballard planned a trio of contemporary dishes that would be less predictable than some autumn meals, while still sourcing seasonal ingredients. The result is as visually striking as it is delicious:

*Seared scallops in saffron sauce
with truffles*

*Seared fillet of beef with beets and
shaved parsnip chips*

*Dessert inspired by a classic English tea:
Scones with jam and clotted cream*

To drink, Ballard recommends a 2013 Catena Alta Chardonnay with the scallops and a 2010 Travaglini Gattinara (Nebbiolo) with the beef. Available at Uncorked Wines & Spirits in Somers. ■■■

