

# Holiday In's

We asked local designers how they welcome houseguests during the holidays. Here's what they said.

During the holidays, it's all about setting the scene: having a fire going, music playing softly, wine open, and glasses ready. You don't want to be so formal that people feel stiff, but you also want them to know that you made something special for them. Greeting your guests warmly with hugs and kisses, and telling them how happy you are to have them goes further than having the perfect flower arrangement or decoration.

— Stacy Kunstel of Dunes and Duchess

Before guests arrive at our home for the holidays, we place beautiful hurricanes filled with glowing candles in the entry. It sets the tone when they walk in the door, and everyone can feel the warmth in the room. They just know they are going to have a wonderful day filled with good food, friends, and family!

— Karen Tolchin and Alyson Lane of Current Home

## How do you say 'welcome'?

It sounds simple, but good food and good wine are essentials. For overnight guests, a small vase of roses on the bedside table lets them know you are glad they came. Add a carafe of water, a small tray for jewelry, a favorite magazine, and a lavender sachet under their pillow. Your guests will feel comfortable, pampered, and definitely in a relaxed holiday state of mind!

— Renae Cohen of Renae Cohen Interiors

For me, welcoming guests starts at the front door. Seasonally, I place a wreath on the door that sets the tone and says, 'Welcome to our home.' At our entrance table are flowers: a mix of white and red amaryllis, magnolia leaves, and pine cones for the holidays. Another key component is the preparation before guests arrive. I want to participate in the festivities as much as my guests. Planning and cooking ahead allow me to be with my guests and not in the kitchen.

— Susan Marocco of Susan Marocco Interiors

Afternoon guests get a hot toddy as soon as their coats are off. So do evening guests. Shortly before they arrive, I build a fire. Nothing is more inviting than a roaring fire, even when it's not that cold out. Family and friends entering my home are immediately enveloped in the evocative scents of pine needles burning in the fireplace, potato pancakes on the side table, eggnog bubbling on the stove, or thick hot cocoa with fresh-baked holiday cookies.

— Katherine Stern of Katherine Stern Design