



Ready, SET, go

She's the creative director famed for her brilliantly imagined table settings. As entertaining season gets into full swing, *Fiona Leahy* shows us how to create the ultimate festive tables

PHOTOGRAPHS BY ELLIS PARRINDER AS TOLD TO RACHAEL DOVE

The Taste of Christmas

There are many aromas and flavours that tell our souls that Christmas is here, but none is as powerful as cinnamon. From Mulled Wine to Mince Pies and Christmas Pudding, it is near impossible to imagine this time of year without the *warmth and sweetness* it provides.

Our cinnamon is sourced in partnership with farmers from Southeast Asia, from the bark of trees that have matured for up to twenty years, to provide the *deepest, spiciest, and most festive flavour.*

Schwartz

SPICE UP YOUR SENSES



I am a compulsive table-setter. I grew up in a hotel and my grandmother ran a B&B, so laying the table is part of my DNA. For the past 13 years I've been

designing tables for a living. Think 300-guest dinners for Dior, Louis Vuitton or Middle Eastern royalty, or private clients of only two (intimacy is the new luxury). Even if I'm just having dinner alone at home, I'll put down a tablecloth, add candlelight (essential), bud vases, a few little flowers and vintage napkins. The trick is to be prepared. Just as you have a wardrobe with clothes for special events, keep a table closet. H&M home is great for linens and napkins, as is Once Milano and Summerill & Bishop. Anthropologie has amazing plates and I buy vintage candlesticks and cutlery (it's heavier and more visually interesting) from Kempton antique market or Portobello Road. Think of your table as a landscape: you need layers of interest and you don't want everything to be the same height. As these tablescapes show, a Christmas setting doesn't have to be traditional or twee. If you love leopard print or astrology, bring it on. Elevate the ordinary. We all have to eat — make it a joy.



Spot the difference

I love leopard. When using a printed tablecloth choose glass plates so you can see the print through them. The tablecloth is always your starting point.

FIONA LEAHY DESIGN leopard-print tablecloth, napkins, crackers, and red bows, all price on request (fionaleahy.com). OKA tortoiseshell candleholder, £20; water glass, POA; Lavaux wine glass, £45 for set of four (oka.com). SOHO HOME candelabra, £65 (sohohome.com). ESTER & ERIK red candles, POA (ester-erik.dk/en-US). JOHN LEWIS charger plates, £12 each (johnlewis.com). THE EDITION 94 cutlery, from £9.80 per piece (theedition94.com). ROMEO + JULES place cards, POA (romeoandjulesstationery.com). QUILL LONDON calligraphy, POA (quilllondon.com). GREAT HIRE gold Napoleon chairs (on previous page), POA (greathire.com). FIONA LEAHY DESIGN seat pads (on previous page), POA (fionaleahy.com). WILD AT HEART flowers, POA (wildatheart.com). HABITAT Arianne table, used throughout, £895 (habitat.co.uk)



Grown-up Gothic

I am obsessed with Soho House's silver treat tins. Put something lovely inside for your guests: some amazing cacao or even a thoughtful note.

LOULOU LADUNE floral tablecloth, £700 (loulouladune.com). ONCE MILANO napkins, £55 each (oncemilano.com). COSTA NOVA Riviera charger plates, £23 each (costanova.pt/en). CAMPBELL REY water glasses, POA (campbell-rey.com). SOHO HOME Barwell cut crystal wine glasses, £30 each (sohohome.com). BY ALICE HOME coupes, £20 each (by-alice.co.uk). SOHO HOME candelabra, £95 (sohohome.com). ESTER & ERIK red candles, POA (ester-erik.dk/en-US). SOHO HOME Audrey silver treats tin, £70 (sohohome.com). THE EDITION 94 cutlery set, £525 (theedition94.com). FIONA LEAHY DESIGN bows, POA (fionaleahy.com). HAND & LOCK embroidered letters, POA (handembroideryshop.com). GUBI chairs (on previous page), £1,041 each (shop.gubi.com). SCARLET & VIOLET flowers, POA (scarletandviolet.com)

Tom Griffiths



THE
ORGANIC
MILK
YOU BUY

IS THE
ORGANIC
MILK
WE BUY

We only use organic British milk
in our coffee, tea, porridge and
Happy Meal® milk bottles.

Just Like McDonald's



**Hippie
Christmas**
Tablescapes should be
interactive. Placing a
crystal on a plate or
inside a cracker is a great
conversation starter.

CABANA MAGAZINE Carolina
tablecloth, £656; and
napkins, £156 for set of four
(cabanamagazine.com).
FIONA LEAHY DESIGN
crackers and bows, POA
(fionaleahy.com). VENUSROX
crystals, POA (venusrox.com).
L'OBJET charger plates,
£255 each (l-objet.com).
DIOR Marrakesh dinner
plates, £85 each (dior.com).
THE EDITION 94 cutlery set,
£525 (thedition.com).
CAMPBELL REY wine
glasses, POA (campbell-rey.com).
DIOR Marrakesh water
glasses, £150 each (dior.com).
SOHO HOME candelabra,
£65 (sohohome.com).
ESTER & ERIK blue candles,
POA (ester-erik.dk/en-US).
WILD AT HEART flowers,
POA (wildatheart.com).

Starry, starry night

If you aren't into print, layer
colours like these rich
midnight blues. Bows are a
lovely keepsake — I get mine
from Barnett Lawson and
have them embroidered
by Hand & Lock.

SUMMERILL & BISHOP
Constellation tablecloth, £250;
and napkins, £25 each
(summerillandbishop.com).
HABITAT Olmo charger plates,
£10 each (habitat.co.uk).
L'OBJET Lapis plates, £155 for
four (l-objet.com). HARRODS
La Regence cutlery set, £6,212
(harrods.com). SOHO HOME
crystal wine glasses,
£32 each (sohohome.com).
CABANA MAGAZINE Balloton
water glasses, £100 each
(cabanamagazine.com).
VENUSROX crystals, £298
(venusrox.com). FIONA LEAHY
DESIGN candle holders,
POA (fionaleahy.com).
CREATIVE CANDLES blue
candles, £14 for four
(creativecandles.com).
HAND & LOCK embroidered
letters, POA (handembroidery
shop.com). FEE GREENING place
cards, POA (feegreening.co.uk).
QUILL LONDON calligraphy,
POA (quilllondon.com).
HABITAT Etta chair, £85
(habitat.co.uk). WILD AT HEART
flowers, POA (wildatheart.com).

Photographer's assistant: James Parker

