



HOUSE OF GOOD CHEER

Step inside the world of Natasha Lawler, a consummate hostess who designed her Charlottesville, Virginia, home with joyful parties in mind

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Designed To Entertain

"I didn't want to use anything in this room that could constrain a colorful table," explains Lawler about her dining chairs and versatile greige-colored walls. "I can go with a red-themed table for Christmas or pink for Easter."

Claim Your Favorite Color

Since they've been married, the Lawlers have hosted a blowout every Saint Patrick's Day—she went to the University of Notre Dame, and her husband is from Boston—so they invite everyone over for corned beef and cabbage. When it came time to paint, Lawler knew there was only one color it could be: green (House Plant, SW 6727; sherwin-williams.com).



JUST ADD SUNSHINE

For this Christmas tree, Lawler goes all out with a zesty motif that started with the fabric on her sectional sofa (Schumacher's Citrus Garden). "I had a friend sew a tree skirt to match my sofa, and then the lemons just kept spreading throughout the house," she explains. Lawler ordered decorative ones for under \$1 each (amazon.com) and ties everything together with the tree's giant bow.

THE BAR BECKONS

She added the bar in the sunroom. Inspired by old New York City pubs, she wanted a brass countertop. "If you leave a glass, it creates a permanent ring," she explains. "When you look at it, you can see all the parties past. My grandmother tells me to clean it, but I say, 'The marks are the point!'"

FOR NATASHA LAWLER, HER LOVE FOR hosting actually dictates her interior decor. "I *really* like entertaining," says the woman who cites a crown roast as her go-to crowd-pleaser. "It's easy. Ask the butcher to tie up a rack of pork like a crown. Then just bake it like a roast." Not surprisingly, Lawler works in event planning and public relations. In 2013, she moved from Hong Kong with her husband and their oldest son into this 1929 Charlottesville, Virginia, home. (She's since had two more boys.)

"Except for a bad 1970s paint job, it hadn't ever been updated. There was no air-conditioning. The grass outside was 6 feet tall. I wanted to keep it traditional but still relevant for today," says Lawler. To preserve the house's charm, she maintained as many original details as possible (down to the window hardware) and updated only what was necessary. They renovated the kitchen, where the family spends the most time together, and added air-conditioning. "My mom wasn't coming until that was done," she admits. During the holiday season, it takes Lawler about 100 lemons, 30 rolls of striped ribbon, a scattering of boxwood wreaths, and a massive tree to get her home ready for Christmas. Read on for her fabulously festive ideas.



SILENT NIGHT
 "I like subtle decorations in formal rooms," Lawler says. "The stockings are neutral. It just takes a few pops of red to feel spirited."



A GLEEFUL GALLERY

Each year, Lawler puts the season's Christmas cards on display by hanging them from the original pantry cabinets using Glue Dots and ribbon. Choosing black ribbon prevents the mix of cards from seeming too cluttered or loud.



LEAVE A GOOD THING ALONE

The formal living room showcases the best of the home's details, like the original happy blue walls, which Lawler says make the perfect backdrop to the antique-filled space and provide a nice segue into the green sunroom. The French doors are also original, but she moved them from elsewhere in the house and painted them black to make the living room look even more refined.

"I realized that decorating is not just finding beautiful ideas on Pinterest. It's about making those ideas and rooms connect."

-NATASHA LAWLER

“I love it when all the things in your home have a special story that reflects your family. It takes patience, but it’s worth it.”



COAT CHECK

In the mudroom, a row of hooks and built-in cubbies shifts to become a self-service cloakroom during parties and increases the odds that the kids will put away schoolbags and jackets. The hand-printed wallpaper, made by Marthe Armitage in London (Chestnut; marthearmitage.co.uk), echoes the equally graphic prints featured in the kitchen backsplash and the farm sink’s skirt.

PREPPED TO PARTY

Lawler lucked into the farm sink, which is original to the house and located right off the dining room. She added a skirt to stylishly conceal the extra storage underneath and admits it’s a game changer for hosting. The DIY entertainer loves to create her own floral arrangements, and the sink makes prepping the blooms a snap. “Beforehand, I’ll fill up buckets with water and flowers; then I’m able to arrange them right there,” she says.



Warm Up Your Gathering Space

Before, the kitchen was split into three rooms with low metal cabinets. “We really live in this space, so it had to be redone,” says Lawler, who took down walls and matched the new floors and cabinets to the adjoining rooms’ original woodwork. She painted the cabinets Chelsea Gray (HC-168) by Benjamin Moore. The glass-front ones at the top match the transoms over the doors and hold her rarely used vases.

Give Yourself Room To Play

"All of the original hardware in the home is brass," says Lawler, who outfitted the breakfast room with a brass table along with an orange accent wall and chandelier. "I wanted a color other than black and gray in here. These are really flexible accessories. If I decide to change out the orange, I can do it easily," she says.



TINY TRADITIONS
She collects Nativity scenes and sets one up in each boy's room every year. The children also dress up a miniature artificial tree with ornaments that they've made or picked out themselves.



EXPERIMENT WITH COLOR
The idea for a bright red bedroom started when she had a quilt made for each of her children when they were born. Her son PJ's quilt was red and white, which in turn inspired the high-gloss cabinets. She then covered one wall in a bold print (Battle of Valmy 1792 by Brunswick & Fils). "I love pattern in general, but wallpaper is such an investment," she says. "I was careful to pick things that would grow with the boys and not just be for the baby stage."





Pull Inspiration from Your Past

Dubbed the “monkey room” thanks to the wallpaper’s motif, their Charlottesville master bedroom is a close re-creation of the couple’s old room in Hong Kong. “I loved it so much that I just brought the look here,” Lawler says. The print is Frutto Proibito from Cole & Son, and the rich plum walls are painted Bottle of Bordeaux (1357) by Benjamin Moore.



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DASHING DIY IDEAS

Steal Natasha Lawler’s six signature moves

1 PERSONALIZED PACKAGING

Lawler uses the outtakes from her family’s Christmas card photo shoot to create a collage wrapping paper by Minted. “We don’t even have to put our name on it!” she says.

2 ZINGY PLACE CARDS

Spell out guests’

initials with cloves on lemons to make aromatic holiday place cards. (She pokes tiny holes in the lemons with a meat thermometer to map out each pattern before she inserts the cloves.)

3 SECRET SANTA

She used some remnants of the Citrus Garden fabric to create

little “packages” to fill in the tree and place throughout the sunroom. Lawler simply wrapped up a plastic foam ball with fabric and a little blue ribbon. “I didn’t even sew the edges,” she says.

4 BUCKET OF CHEER

Copy Lawler’s ingenious ice bucket by filling

a clean, empty gallon paint bucket with 2 inches of water and then freezing it. Next, insert a sand-filled 2-liter plastic bottle in the bucket. Place leaves, berries, lemon slices, and 2 more inches of water around the bottle, and freeze. Repeat until the bucket is filled with fruit and frozen water. Let it sit in

the freezer for two hours. Allow it to thaw just enough to remove the bucket and bottle.

5 WINTER GREENS

Lawler likes to order preserved boxwood wreaths (amazon.com) so she can pull them out year after year. These in particular are going on their fifth Christmas.

6 TIN CAN VASES

She orders Bianco DiNapoli tomatoes online (also from amazon.com) and uses the bright yellow-and-red cans for holding poinsettias and orchids. There’s no replanting required—just drop the plastic containers right into the cans. *SL*