



### Edible Décor

I love working with a designer that is open to sharing the spotlight, allowing us creative foodies to add edible décor to the mix. When you embellish the table with a stunning “arrangement” of crudité, interesting tapas, colorful dips, cheeses, charcuterie, hand-rolled breadsticks, artisan breads and even desserts, you will see guests excited to sit down and dig in. Let's face it, people eat with their eyes, right? As caterers, we should whet their appetites before they even sit down to eat!

An amuse-bouche is another way to add flair and excitement to a table. Suggest an amuse that will complement and enhance the event's design and florals.



# Captivating Tabletops

Enhance the dining experience with tablescapes that “wow” clients and their guests

BY ROBIN SELDEN,  
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Precious tabletop real estate has come a long way since I started in this business. Much like the fashion industry, we see trends come and go and even resurface again as “retro-modern” throwbacks.

Tabletop trends today run the gamut from minimalistic industrial to over-the-top elaborate—think “days of wine and roses,” with crystal chandeliers and massive floral installations. We're seeing monochromatic modern, into-the-woods botanical, eclectic shabby chic, old-world elegant and everything in between. No matter the style, these creative, curated tabletops are a must for clients who want to create jaw-dropping moments for their guests.

*Mixing colors and styles of glassware (opposite) and edible decor (right and above right) are two ways to take tabletops to the next level, advises Selden.*





**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Robin Selden is the managing partner and executive chef of Connecticut- and New York City-based Marcia Selden Catering and Naked Fig Catering.

She and her brother Jeffrey Selden were named two of the "100 Most Inspiring People" in the wedding industry by The Knot. Robin was also named to the BizBash 500, celebrating the top 500 event professionals in 2020 in the U.S., and was named as one of the 10 Industry Innovators for 2022 by BizBash.

Selden is on the President's Council of the International Caterers Association and won their coveted Chef of the Year award. She's a past Innovative Chef of the Year and a current Ambassador Chef for the Greenwich Wine & Food Festival. Comfortable on stage, she emcees the Art of Catering Food at the Catersource Conference, where she also judges the cooking and cocktail competitions. Robin received The Richard Carbotti Award in July 2021 at the Special Event/Catersource Conference, awarded annually to industry leaders who demonstrate Richard's spirit of volunteerism and philanthropy.

She sits on three not-for-profit boards, including The American Cancer Society, and on the advisory board of two national magazines. Robin is a board ambassador for the Make-A-Wish Foundation and helped to establish the first Women's Wellness event for the American Cancer Society: Women Leading the Way to Wellness. For the last seven years Robin and Jeffrey have taught a catering class at Cornell University's School of Hospitality in the fall as well as a special events class at the Boston University School of Hospitality in the spring.

She resides in Stamford, Connecticut, with her husband Michael, twins Max and Maggie, and her Goldendoodle "canine kids" Ozzie and Bo. For more information, visit [marciaselden.com](http://marciaselden.com).

- **Selecting linens that feel great to the touch.** For example, for a Swiss winter-themed wedding, we used gray cashmere and black watch plaid linens. They felt like a warm, luxurious hug.

- **Adding special touches that mean something to the host and hostess,** wedding couple or guest of honor, such as interesting favors that add flair and design to a table.

The goal is for guests to be smiling from ear to ear when they walk into the room or tent. When they're surprised and delighted by stunning tabletops with personalized or subtle details, you'll know you helped create special moments they'll never forget. ●



**Tabletop Tips**

Additional ways to create a memorable tablescape include:

- **Using a very special plate** for one of the courses (or multiple plates if the budget allows). An atypical charger can really make a statement as well.
- **Mixing colorful or specialty glassware to add interest and beauty to the table.** Typically, this requires using multiple tabletop rental companies and is well worth it for the look. While this is a scullery challenge, some of these companies have such precious wares that they send their own teams to do the sanitation to ensure that their items are cleaned and packed properly.
- **Focusing on lighting.** Take a tablescape to the next level by throwing on a wash of hot pink and some pin lights, for example.
- **Curating place cards, napkins and menus.**

Examples include hand-calligraphed menus on poured resin, plexiglass, mirror or even cork; hand-painted place cards; and custom-monogrammed napkins. We did a recent 50th surprise birthday celebration for a Scottish car enthusiast at a world-renowned luxury automotive restoration center where we placed the tables alongside the incredible collectible cars. Details that blew the birthday boy away were the custom napkins made out of his family's Scottish plaid and incorporating thistle—a traditional Scottish plant—into all of the florals.



*At Marcia Selden Catering events, tabletops have been enhanced with dramatic lighting (opposite bottom, before and after); interesting chargers and menus (above and above left); Scottish plaid napkins and thistle for a guest of honor with Scottish heritage (top); and, for a winter-themed wedding, a cashmere tablecloth and black-watch plaid linens (opposite top).*