

Catering Foodservice & Events

Here's to the Holidays

*Menu and
tabletop décor
inspiration for
the busy months
ahead*

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TABLETOP TRENDS

How to deliver big on both
style and sustainability
this holiday season

Mango Muse Events emphasizes sustainability when creating inviting tablescapes.

BY CONNIE JESKE CRANE

As we head into another busy holiday season, creating holiday tablescapes comes with an interesting tension.

Asked about the mood and visual impact their clients want to create for their events, industry experts say their wish lists reflect not only a bold, new aesthetic direction but also a request for sustainability at each step.

There's a call for upcoming celebrations to feel absolutely special—something that traces back to the pandemic. Jamie Chang, owner of **MANGO MUSE EVENTS** in the San Francisco Bay Area, says our need to let loose is lending a maximalist vibe to event menus and décor alike. "It's kind of going 'more is more,'" says Chang. "And I think it's a little bit to do with this post-Covid resurgence of, 'Oh, we can party. Oh, let's just go big!'"

At the same time, there's a call for sustainability to be woven in. "I think the interesting thing is that maximalism is also countered with sustainability, which is a huge, huge thing for a lot of my clients, but also for me personally," says Chang. "So, how do you balance that? How do you balance that look, that feel, while not having a whole bunch of stuff that you end up throwing out at the end of the day?"

To help you prepare for the busy party season ahead, here are some creative tips from event professionals on how to do both—create a sense of warm welcome, boldness and excitement at the table, while meeting expectations for environmental sustainability.



Going beyond red and green, B Floral Event Design & Production is incorporating lots of color in its holiday designs (top and above).

COLOR IS THE BIG STORY

Maybe it's the Barbie effect. Maybe it's a reaction to minimalism. Whatever the reason, one thing everyone seems to be talking about this year—in décor, in fashion and also with events—is going bigger and brighter with colors.

"The all-white trend, I see it fading away," says Francesca Vasquez of New York's **B FLORAL EVENT DESIGN & PRODUCTION**. She adds that bold and non-traditional choices are on-trend this year for holiday tables, whether in judicious little pops or larger blocks: "Emerald, purples, cobalt blue, dark pink. Something that's super-bold but isn't exactly screaming holidays, like the red and green."

Chang describes a similar shift from muted and comforting choices to bright multi-color schemes: "We're going across the color scale between pink and orange and blue and green and yellow. We're bringing in a lot more color, which is fun. But I'm also seeing a surge in this kind of a brightness to it, too."

In Stamford, Connecticut, Robin Selden of **MARCIA SELDEN CATERING** and **NAKED FIG CATERING** says the looks her company is loving for this year's holiday season include "clean, white, minimalist and modern with splashes of color—very winter wonderland but not screaming 'holiday,' if that makes sense. We're obsessed with monochromatic looks, as well as really embracing a color and going for it with the tabletop design."

As for how to add all this visual interest sustainably, Chang says event tableware rentals are one route. "Rental companies are something I really recommend because, once again, it's more eco-friendly," she says. "You're using things that can be reused a lot better."



Tabletop designs favored by Marcia Selden Catering embrace color (top) and are often monochromatic (above).

MIXING AND MATCHING



Along with color, eclecticism goes hand-in-hand with the current vibe. Mixing and matching elements—like different colored glassware, plates and linens—is a great way to build on that maximalist aesthetic. “It’s a little bit more of mixing and matching types as opposed to picking a particular style,” says Chang. “That’s definitely more how people are going. A little bit more eclectic.”

With metals, the trends haven’t changed as much, with experts noting the continuing popularity of gold. “Gold elements still seem to be what people gravitate towards,” Chang says. “But I do think there’s a lot more in that same vein of mixing metals a little bit more, of mixing and matching.” Ultimately, Chang says the look is also a bit less formal because not everything is matching.

So what if you’re a caterer who has already invested in, perhaps, white dinnerware that you use year-round? According to Matt Hullfish of **COSTA NOVA** and **CASAFINA**, producers of sustainable stoneware, strategic purchases can help build a fresh color story for your holiday table settings.

As an example, Hullfish says his company recently introduced a fall-themed line called Plymouth, with rich new colors such as paprika, turquoise and green. Caterers can simply add a salad plate from such a line to that white dinner plate. “From a catering standpoint, it’s a way to address those seasonal short-lived time periods like an Easter or Thanksgiving without doing a massive collection,” says Hullfish. “And it’s also less of an investment for the caterer.”

A Mango Muse table (left) mixes in citrus with the multicolored florals and features gold elements. With Costa Nova’s Plymouth line (top), caterers can add Thanksgiving-themed accent plates to tabletops.

LAYERS, TEXTURE AND UNEXPECTED TOUCHES

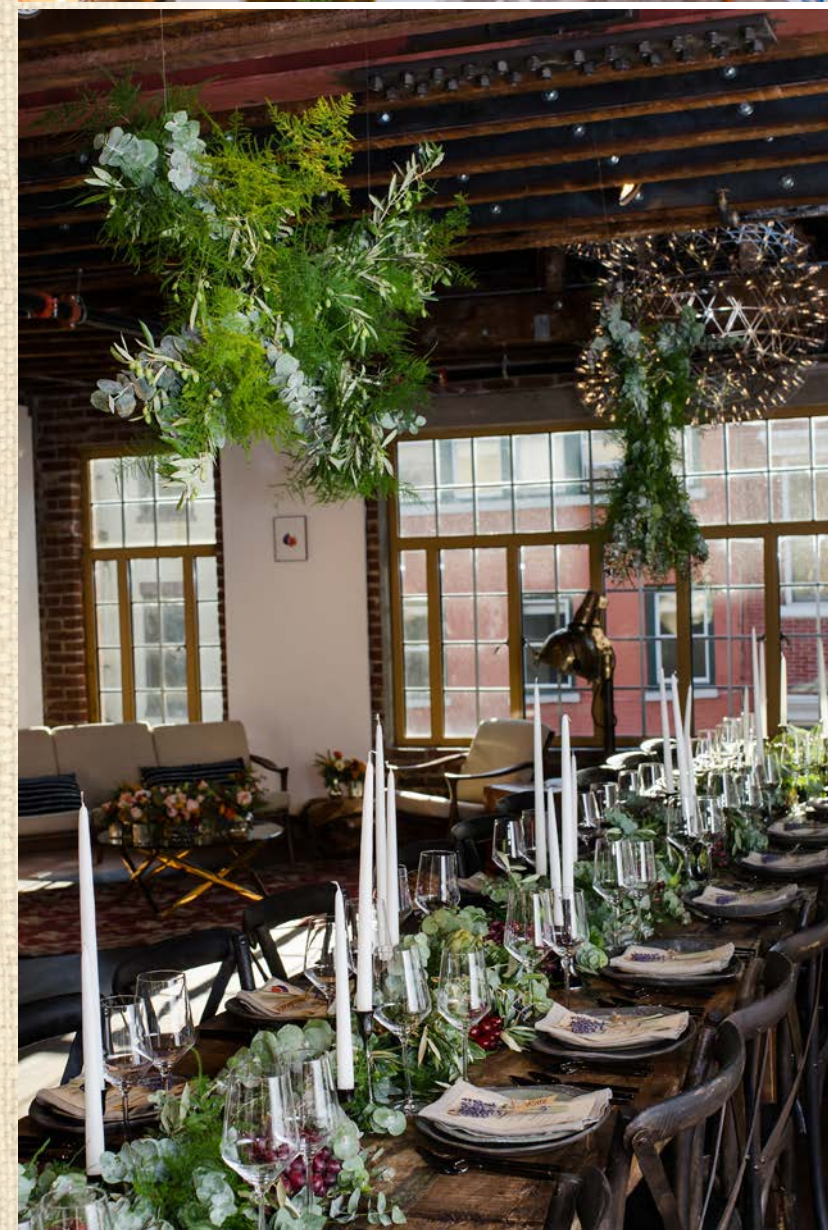
Another way to build on the more-is-more vibe is through texture and layering, and by adding elements that are fun or unexpected. Chang says vintage and found items are a wonderful route here: “This concept of a collection of items as a centerpiece, as opposed to just one floral thing, or a couple of floral things. The concept of having a few pieces, and maybe some of them are floral and some of them aren’t.”

Besides florals or greenery, Chang suggests mixing in candelabras, classical busts, mirrored elements and fabrics such as velvet to table displays.

Similarly, Vasquez says: “We had a disco event for a private client and we threw these really fun disco balls into all of the installations that we did for them. It’s about being really creative in the elements that you use.”

Among the great ways to add layers and texture for holiday tables, Selden suggests “stunning fabrics in plaids and flannels bringing together the warmth of the season” and “metallic accents in silver or gold with lots of candlelight to reflect off the shiny surfaces.” She is also a fan of adding edible elements as tabletop décor, from fresh produce to “hand-rolled breadsticks or hummus or crudité or cheese boards for guests to enjoy while waiting for their first course.”

A B Floral holiday design featured abundant greenery on and above the table (left). Marcia Selden tablescapes often feature edible elements (top).





RETHINKING FLORALS AND NATURAL ELEMENTS

When it comes to holiday décor, sustainability is also driving aesthetic sensibilities. There's a big trend today toward having natural elements and materials as design motifs.

Dried florals, for example, are something Vasquez sees trending. "We're seeing a lot of the floral décor requests reflecting nature and more earthy elements," says Vasquez. "So, falling into that is pampas and all the dried types of florals that have a very earthy vibe." Besides conveying a natural aesthetic, Vasquez says dried florals last a very long time and can be reused. "And they're just more durable. They're not as likely, if you move around your florals too much, to get bruised."

Chang also sees "things that can have a life afterwards, a lot of plants, dried flowers" as popular choices this season, as well as locally sourced greenery and much simpler, more structural floral arrangements.

Corporate clients are asking for a simpler floral aesthetic and alternatives to standard "all-floral, really lush centerpieces," notes Vasquez. One route that works well, she says, is using smaller floral arrangements or bud vases and then adding in a generous selection of different-sized votive candles.

Tables by B Floral Event Design (above) often feature dried florals and pampas. Simpler arrangements with locally sourced greenery (below) are popular with Mango Muse's clients.



Left: Christmas trees from Costa Nova's Festa line, made from Ecogres, a sustainable clay. Below: Single-color dinnerware—such as the Costa Nova Luzia line—can be accented with holiday pieces, in order to minimize cost and supply.



INTENTIONALITY AND BALANCE

Costa Nova's Hullfish underlines that when it comes to tableware, sustainability encompasses many steps. It could include sourcing the eco-friendliest products—as an example, he notes that his company is "one of the first ceramics factories to incorporate a recycled clay into our manufacturing process." It could also include looking for long-lasting materials, versatile pieces and, importantly, sourcing suppliers with robust sustainable practices.

Overall, when it comes to holiday décor style, Chang says making that holiday magic come together involves not just creativity but intentionality: "It's about this goal or hope that we're not being wasteful. And I think it is a balance." ●

For More Information

MANGO MUSE EVENTS

●●● mangomuseevents.com

COSTA NOVA AND CASAFINA

●●● costanovaprofessional.com

MARCIA SELDEN CATERING

●●● marciaselden.com

B FLORAL EVENT DESIGN & PRODUCTION

●●● bfloral.com