

SCENE >

cheers to the holidays!

From highballs to napkins, swizzle sticks to wine charms, novel little cocktail accessories are making a comeback. Here's how to put them to good use this season.

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purple wine glass, amber tumbler, wine goblet, hammered cocktail shaker, gold plates, napkins, flute: CRATE AND BARREL, colorful tumblers, cordial glass, olive martini glass: FIREWORKS, small cocktail shaker, swizzle sticks: POTTERY BARN

SCENE

**“Whatever you decide,
set everything out
before your guests arrive,
leaving you to be a guest
at your own party!”**

— COLIN COWIE

Twinkling music... savory canapés... the appealing clink of fine crystal – there's something decidedly elegant about the classic cocktail party. Fortunately, throwing one is actually easier than masterminding a sit-down dinner for ten. "All you really need is a stiff, colorful cocktail, some groovy music mixed in with favorite holiday tunes, tasty food, and a colorful group of guests," says entertainment guru Colin Cowie. So deck your halls, grace your tables with the latest host of enchanting accessories, and get the party started! >

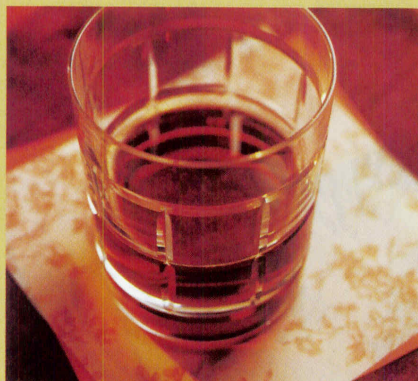
decanter, frame – POTTERY BARN, snifter – CRATE AND BARREL
ornaments – APRIL CORNELL

Making Spirits Bright

While you may want to stock a full bar in order to appeal to everyone's tastes, consider lifting holiday spirits with one exceptional drink as well: "I like to offer a signature cocktail when guests arrive," explains Cowie, who favors the classic Kir Royale, a glass of champagne livened up with Chambord (a raspberry-flavored liqueur). For extra panache, Cowie dips the rims of the glasses into caramelized sugar, which he browns ahead of time in a saucepan. A few other sparkling tips to follow:

- Limit your wine list to two choices – try an inexpensive Pinot Noir (served slightly cooler than room temperature) and a Chenin Blanc or Chardonnay (served at about 50 degrees – not ice-cold).
- Plan on five glasses per bottle – but figure that less wine will be consumed if you're serving a full bar and a champagne cocktail as well.
- Banish plastic! Simple glasses (affordable and dishwasher-safe) are an etiquette must, and can be re-used year after year.
- Buy ice. Then buy more ice – you can never have too much.
- In addition to seltzers and sodas, stock fresh fruit juices instead of artificial-tasting, pre-blended mixers.
- Offer a selection of beautiful stirrers, swizzle sticks, and wine charms, plus a cocktail shaker for the more Bond-ian drinkers in the crowd.
- Don't forget garnishes – citrus peel, olives, pickled onions, cherries, horseradish, bitters, and celery – served in an array of gleaming glass dishes.

CANDLESTICKS – THE BOMBAY COMPANY,
CANDLES – ILLUMINATIONS, VASE – CRATE AND BARREL,
BEADED COASTERS – POTTERY BARN



NAPKIN & GLASS – CRATE AND BARREL
PAPER – PAPER TREE



CENTER PILLOW (BEADED), BOTTOM-RIGHT (SECOND FROM END) – THE BOMBAY COMPANY, ALL OTHER PILLOWS – APRIL CORNELL

Food for Thought

Tempting nibbles are often more appetizing than a three-course meal – this doesn't mean, however, that you need to go blind, folding phyllo dough into Lilliputian triangles. "Offer a limited selection of tasty treats that can be presented beautifully, yet only take minutes to prepare – and, of course, feel free to buy a few appetizers if you're not in the mood to cook," advises Cowie. "Whatever you decide, set everything out before your guests arrive, leaving you to be a guest at your own party!"

- If your gathering takes the place of dinner, figure on eight appetizers per person. A minimum of three different choices is standard.
- To minimize the workload, consider hors d'oeuvres that are served in bulk (like a cheese tray with baguette slices), rather than those that require individual preparation (i.e., stuffed snow peas). If you're pining for more elaborate appetizers, many restaurants – such as the Restaurants at The Corners –

offer take out. Just arrange it on a platter and call it your own.

- Use the Internet as a cooking source. At www.allrecipes.com, users can browse through hundreds of appetizer recipes – you can search by ingredient or by type (i.e., dips, wraps, spicy, rolled, ethnic) – and each includes preparation time so you can plan accordingly.

A Note About Music

The trick here: Mix it up! Listening to an entire evening of I'll be Home for Christmas guarantees a mellow flavor; instead, fill your CD player with a selection of holiday tunes interspersed with jazzy cocktail music, like Oscar Peterson and Esquivel...then hit the random button. And remember: Turn up the volume a tad – not only do you want to hear the music over lively voices, but having to lean in to make yourself heard encourages cozy conversations. ■

Hillary Quinn is an Edmonds-based lifestyle writer, whose work has appeared in many national magazines, including *Redbook*, *Self*, *Cosmopolitan*, and *Bride's*.

HOLIDAY MUSIC PARTY PICKS

Here are a few suggestions for mixing with the mood, yet staying with the season.



COCKTAIL CDS – POTTERY BARN

CHRISTMAS COCKTAIL, PART ONE, ULTRA LOUNGE SERIES

(Capitol 1996)

'50s and '60s holiday hits performed by Peggy Lee, Lou Rawls, Julie London and Nat King Cole.

CHRISTMAS WITH THE RAT PACK, FRANK SINATRA, DEAN MARTIN AND SAMMY DAVIS JR.

(Capitol 1996)

COOL CHRISTMAS BLUES, CHARLES BROWN

(Bullseye Blues, 1994)

Includes soulful tunes such as "Merry Christmas Baby" and "Please Come Home For Christmas."

SNOWFALL, THE TONY BENNETT CHRISTMAS ALBUM

(Sony, 1994)

WHAT A WONDERFUL CHRISTMAS, LOUIS ARMSTRONG & FRIENDS

(Hip-o, 1997)

Classics from Sachmo, Duke Ellington, Lionel Hampton, Dinah Washington and Eartha Kitt.

Also, check out these stores for holiday compilation CDs; if you like the goods, chances are you'll like their music.

Banana Republic	425.453.0991
Borders Books and Music	425.990.8171
Eddie Bauer Home Collection	425.637.0690
Gap	425.454.9132
Nordstrom	425.455.5800
Pottery Barn	425.451.0097
Starbucks Coffee at the Lodge	425.452.5534
Sam Goody	425.451.3861
Williams-Sonoma	425.454.7007