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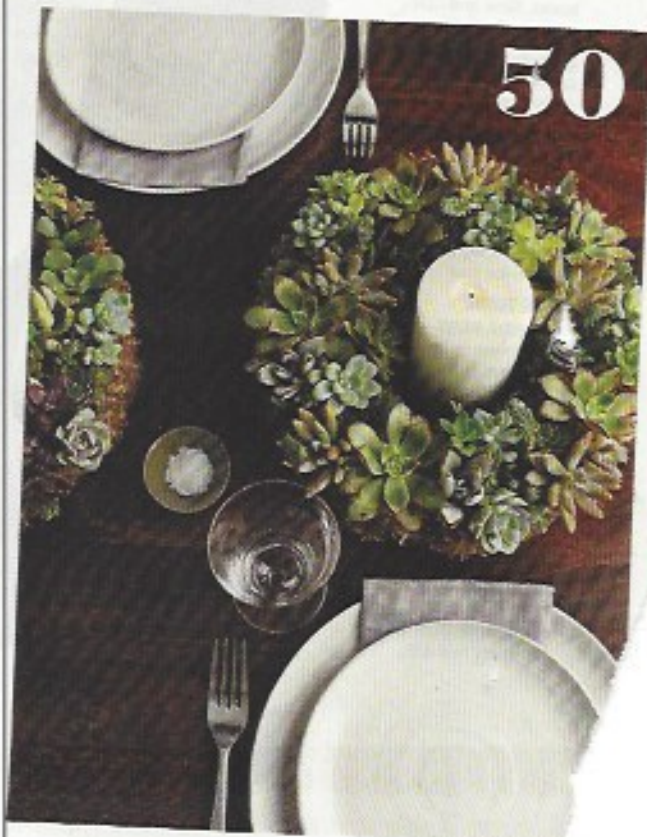
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HOME

DECORATING IDEAS, ORGANIZING TRICKS, BUDGET BUYS



Katie and her daughters, Prentiss, 11, and Meredith, 7, on the porch decked out with pine garlands.

Christmas *in* Connecticut

LIFESTYLE MAVEN KATIE BROWN SHARES HER SIMPLE SPRUCE-UPS AND TIME-HONORED TRADITIONS FOR THE MERRIEST MONTH OF THE YEAR.

By Judy Prouty • Photography by David A. Land

When Katie Brown and her husband, William Corbin, bought their 19th-century

Colonial five years ago, she knew they'd found the perfect place for big holiday gatherings. "It's so quirky," she says. "I love the airy rooms and meandering floor plan." The house reminded Katie of her grandfather's cabin on a lake in upper Michigan, where she grew up. "I've always wanted that same rustic been-there-forever look." So Katie, editor in chief of Yahoo Makers and founder of Katie Brown Workshop, decorated with rehabbed castoffs and treasures scavenged from flea markets. Once December rolls around, she gives her eclectic decor a festive boost with bundles of backyard greens and woodland accents. "I'm inspired by natural beauty," she says. "I like to bring the outdoors in." Throughout the season family traditions also play a role. The annual highlight for the couple's two daughters, Meredith and Prentiss, is a trip to the local tree farm in search of the perfect blue spruce. Advent calendars and ornaments handcrafted by Katie and the girls end up adorning tabletops and counters. "On Christmas day we wear matching PJs and eat sloppy Joe casserole," says Katie. "It's the simple things that make Christmas meaningful."





*"Every year I pull out my
handmade stockings
and the girls string
popcorn and cranberry
garlands for the tree,"
Katie says.*

On the mantel, glass vases filled with gold-painted walnuts hold bouquets of red berries. Pinecone trees add a natural touch, while homemade paper snowflakes brighten the windows.

"The kitchen is Christmas central," says Katie, "where we bake cookies for the grandparents and, of course, Santa."



Tiny trees line the window sill, and a wreath made from silver ball ornaments surrounds a dessert stand.



A break-the-rules decorator, Katie painted the walls red and the ceiling lavender in the downstairs room where she likes to wrap packages. "I lived with neutral palettes for so long that I wanted hot colors here," says Katie.



Katie does a ritual reading of The Night Before Christmas in the girls' hangout spot at the top of the stairs.



Katie's Holiday Handbook

- ★ I'm big on traditions—my mother's easy cinnamon bread and hot mulled cider are staples.
- ★ Stock up at the seasonal after-sales for wrapping paper, ornaments, everything.
- ★ Encourage your kids' creativity—our girls get pink and purple faux trees for their bedrooms to dress up any way they want.
- ★ Don't try to decorate every room. Focus on the main rooms. Give smaller spaces a seasonal touch with vignettes of Santas or silver mini trees.
- ★ Try out a different palette or theme every year, and use touches of the colors throughout the house. "I like red candles and wide plaid ribbons."