

cover story

Creativity has place at holiday tables



Celebrity settings: Photojournalist Linda Solomon chose an Americana theme for her presentation at this year's Holiday Tables event at Cranbrook House. Staff photo by Dan Dean. On the Cover: Karen Serota and David D.J. Rau prepare their table. Photo by William Hansen.

BY MARY KLEMIC
At Home Editor

Twenty-one tables set with more than plates and silverware will be on elegant, exquisite exhibit at the 21st annual Holiday Tables, starting next week at historic Cranbrook House in Bloomfield Hills.

Holiday Tables is a fund-raiser to preserve Cranbrook House, home of Cranbrook founders George and Ellen Booth. The tables in the event by area notables are always set with imagination and fun. The table by this year's honorary chairperson, nationally recognized photojournalist Linda Solomon of Birmingham, is a good example.

"America" is the theme of her table.

"An old-fashioned Americana holiday utilizing all sorts of old things going back to the Wild West" is how she described it.

Indian conches, a harvest basket including Indian corn, and an Indian figure seated in one chair are among the features. A sign at hand will bring smiles, considering Solomon's profession - "No Unauthorized Cameras Allowed," it warns.

Another table, by David D.J. Rau and Karen Serota, is entitled "Mr. Booth Shares a Holiday Toast with the Head Gardener." Rau is curator of education, Cranbrook Art Museum. Serota is registrar, Cranbrook Art Museum and cultural properties, Cranbrook Educational Community. The setting of the little room known as George Booth's Country Office in Cranbrook House inspired the table's theme and design. Serota was instrumental in the restoration of the room three years ago to about 1910.

Velvet, lace and brocade tablecloths adorned with ribbons and hand-blown, vegetable-shaped ornaments, trimmed in ivy and real baby pears dress the table. It is set with antique, flower-covered china and Czechoslovakian amethyst glassware from the Booth collection at Cranbrook, and also features two Jonathan Gibson pewter goblets, a Waterford bowl full of roses, a pineapple and a watering can filled with fresh flowers.

You are to imagine that Booth and the head gardener are meeting here to toast the holidays. The Country Office was where Booth would meet with his agrarian staff who maintained the grounds and farms on the estate. Smoking paraphernalia loaned by Churchill's of Birmingham, decanters filled with liqueurs and gifts of canned vegetables and greeting cards complete the theme.

The table by Jacobson's is in the Sun Room and has a "Joyeux Noel" theme, with Haviland china and Baccarat crystal, said Janice Cecil, Jacobson's visual merchandise manager. Bold color accents in fuchsia, chartreuse and gold velvet and silks are featured. Garland trimmed

with imported French ribbons and roses will be lit and swagged over windows.

Other Holiday Tables participants are the Bloomfield Hills Garden Club, Edith Briskin, Pa Butzin, Cranbrook Academy of Art, Cranbrook Garden Auxiliary, Cranbrook House Auxiliary, Maureen D'Avanzo, Jane Femmel, Cinka Gerova-Ortega, Zofia Kafarski, Jeanette Kermanian, Joyce Koreman, Robert Kowalczyk, Jackie Krupp, Mary Beth MacGuidwin, Annie Margulis, Chris Negro and Wendell and Lynda Scales.

Holiday tables in the home have their own magnificence.

"Inspiration for this holiday season comes from the garden," said Judy Walker-Welch, ASID, interior designer with Gorman's Studio of Interior Design. "Use vintage silver bowls and trays to arrange seasonal fruits and flowers on moss beds. Arrange various sizes of pillar candles on either side, laced with raffia and thin ribbons."

Welch also suggested "ivy sculpture" for the table, created by wrapping a three-tiered plate stand with ivy and placing antique plates of the same color on the tiers. Place small antiques and votive candles on either side.

Inspiration can be found in "A Tiffany Christmas," a book by Tiffany design director John Loring. The book contains a variety of table settings and decorations collected by Tiffany & Co. over the last decade.

For example, red plaid bows and fabrics suggest a Victorian Christmas. A formal French mood is attained with a three-tiered floral topiary tree featuring an assortment of red and blue flowers, and studded with pearls and tied with tiny gold ribbon bows. Adorn a red and black brocade covered table with gilded pine cones and walnuts and a cachepot filled with red berries, white hothouse tulips, orchids, irises and roses. Make a centerpiece of mirrored Christmas tree balls.

For Holiday Tables, a Patron Tea and Preview, with modeling of vintage gowns from Aunt Violet's Collection in Rochester, is 2-5 p.m. Thursday, Nov. 21; tickets are \$35 each. The tea is sponsored by Opus One. General viewing is 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday-Saturday, Nov. 22-23, and noon to 4 p.m. Sunday; tickets are \$8 each if bought in advance or \$10 at the door. Tickets may be ordered by calling (810) 645-3147 or bought in advance at Harp's Lingerie, Jacobson's, Magnolia's and Marley's in the Townsend Hotel in Birmingham; at Miner's in Bloomfield Hills; at Nordstrom, Hudson's and Tilly's Greenhouse in Troy; and at the Spotlight Studio in Rochester.

Cranbrook House is at 380 Lone Pine Road. Free shuttle parking is available in Christ Church Cranbrook's lot across the street.

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