

Fashion

In Feasting

Elizabeth Davis tells you how to climax Christmas with a festive centerpiece



THERE IS magic in the very spirit of Christmas! Remember how it changed Scrooge from a crusty old curmudgeon to a lovable, open-hearted and open-handed gentleman who kept Christmas all year long?

Christmas is the time of year when our hearts are fullest. What if our purses *aren't* as full? That needn't take the magic out of Christmas! It's love, not money, that counts at Christmas. Love—and all the thoughtful, money-saving ways and means for carrying out this special of all holidays.

To be in keeping with the magic spirit of Christmas, you'll want to decorate your dinner table. First of all, decide upon your color scheme. Shall it be the traditional red and green—or do you prefer a more glamorous note? Red and silver, blue and silver and red, or blue combined with gold, perhaps.

One of the most effective and simple centerpieces is built from a cluster of multi-sized tinsel balls on a bed of spruce. Ornamental snow may be sprinkled on the spruce if you wish. Or, if you prefer, a modern "tree-candle" may be substituted for the balls.

A shallow bowl piled high with fruits and decorated with holly spray radiates good cheer. Red and green crepe paper streamers, criss-crossed diagonally on a snowy white cloth, would be particularly attractive with fresh greens in a low, red bowl to set it off. You can buy the streamers in rolls already cut to the proper width.

A greater abundance of time and money leads to something for the table called a "Jack Horner Pie". Draw a square on a piece of white cardboard with a half circle extended on each of the four sides. Mark the four lines that form the sides of the square and the diameters of the circles, and turn up the half circles for the sides of the "Jack Horner Pie". Around the edge of each half circle paste crepe paper ruffles, and within the half circles paste Santa Claus cut-outs. Fill the "Jack Horner" pie shell with little Cellophane bags containing gifts, candies or nuts, and tied with ribbons and greens. These same little bags may be used for place favors, too, if you're not having the pie for a centerpiece.

Especially for the children, place a small Christmas tree in the center of the table. Around its base arrange wee gifts wrapped in tinfoil. To mark the place of each guest, use a lighted candle in a large, green gumdrop candlestick with a white life saver for a handle. Or there is a modern tree of heavy tinfoil, cut into narrow leaves, with coarse green net billowed over it.

And then come centerpieces that are truly works-of-art which must not be ruined by being over-done. At the center of the feast table shines a blue Cellophane

tree hung with gardenias for women guests and red-rose boutonnieres for men. Another kind of tree is made from three graded-size wire circles and a broomstick trunk. The tree form is held by four upright wires, and the entire tree frame is bound with fringed Cellophane bands. Lighting the tree on either side are three graduated-size white candles in star holders.

Another bit of loveliness is a cluster of at least a dozen white tapers set in a bed of winter greens with large silver bells nestled around. For an additional effective decoration, golden bells with swinging red clappers may be suspended over the table. Let them be the center of attraction by using on the table only tall, red tapers set in snowball candlesticks.

A far cry from the traditional is this unusual scheme of dark blue damask, silver holly with red berries, silver tinsel tree, crystal glassware and combined favors and nut-cups of white with white Cellophane frills. Should none of these strike a responsive chord, try using trees of felt, transparent wrapping paper, peppermint stick candy or one covered with gilded pine cones. Use white and gold angels or a copper wire-mesh tree strung with copper stars and lit by red candles within.

For a Christmas Eve or Christmas night meal comes an attractive idea for a sleighbell buffet table. At one end of the table races a "Goodie Sleigh"—an unpainted wooden sleigh filled with assorted fruits, popcorn balls, apples, pine and spruce. At the other end is a tiny, frosted evergreen tree on a bed of cotton.

There's one more you must hear about—Christmas nosegays, reminiscent of every Christmas there ever was, made of holiday indispensables—popcorn, cranberries and balsam. Slide the berries and popcorn onto small green-covered wires and tuck them among sprigs of green.

This magic spirit of Christmas may be revealed in the kind and color of the food served. Top your tiered fruit cake with a shining tinsel ball. Cut orange peel and curve it to hold tiny Christmas balls as a garnish for that bird of birds—the turkey. Freeze a cherry or a sprig of mint into each ice cube. And don't forget bright red apples, mint marmalade, tomato jelly ring garnished with discs of green, stuffed olives, avocado half-shell scallop with crab and pimento, cranberry jelly, juice cocktail or sherbet, cinnamon pears or apples. Nor is Christmas complete without cookies. Cut them as angels, trees, wreaths and Santas, frost generously and sprinkle lightly with your choice of decorative confection.

Then happy holidays to you and may your Christmas dinner be the loveliest ever!