

From: "Colin Cowie Lifestyle" <[REDACTED]>

To: "[REDACTED]" <[REDACTED]>

Subject: Colin Cowie Thanksgiving: Setting the Table

Date: Wed, 26 Nov 2003 16:32:22 +0000

 A Colin Cowie Thanksgiving

SETTING THE TABLE

Setting the table is like opening your closet and selecting an outfit... with a little creativity and confidence, the possibilities are endless. Even the most basic plates and napkins can be turned into something quite spectacular.

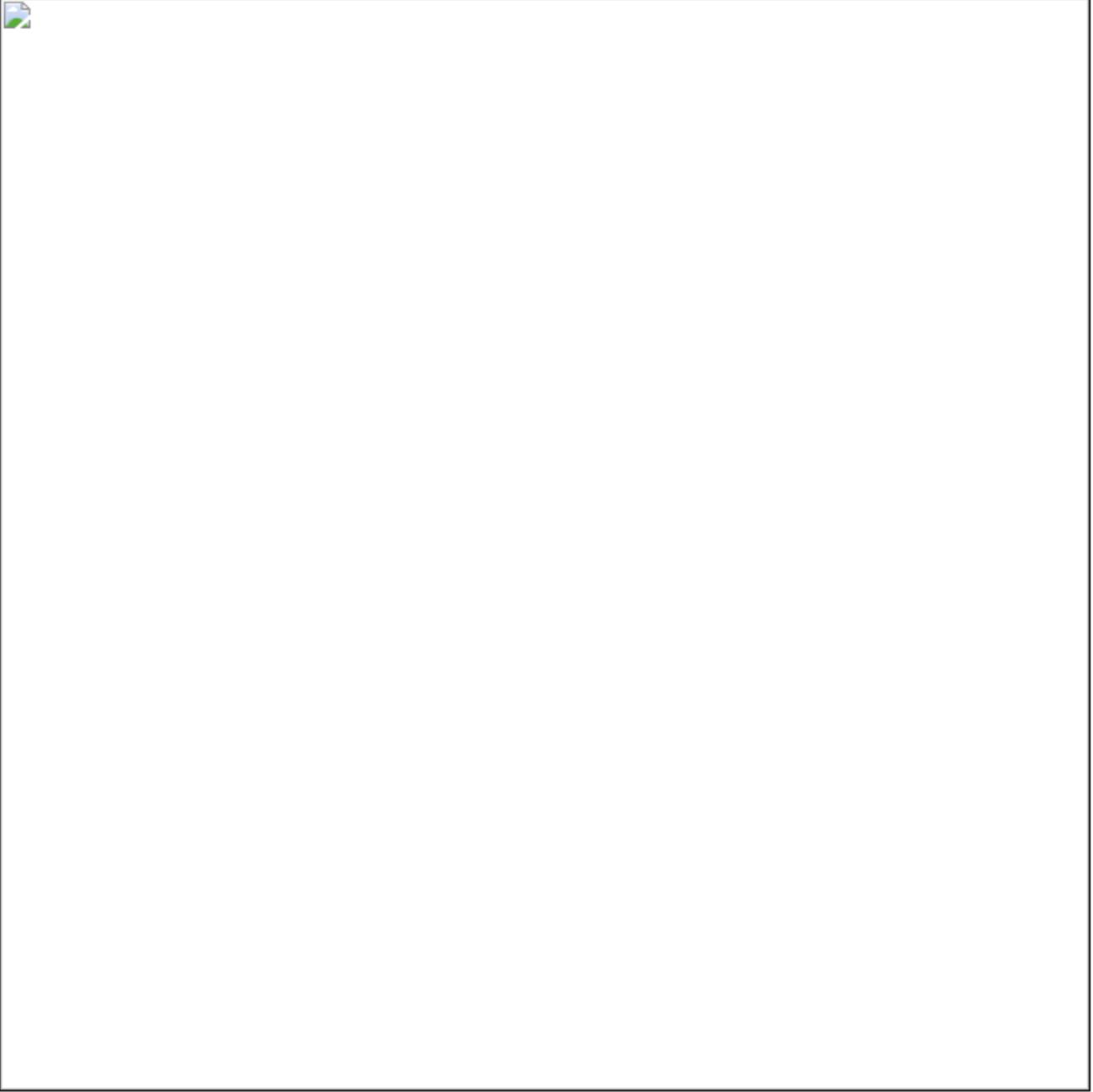
The Colors: Autumnal, rich, and organic... think natural neutrals like cream, and rich shades of chocolate brown, Sienna, and burnished orange.

The Shapes: It doesn't matter whether your table is round, rectangular, or square; it's all about the items you use to dress it and the combination of colors.

The Elements: With an abundant feast like Thanksgiving, aim for beautiful simplicity on the table itself. Try editing the number of elements used on the table (In other words, resisting the urge to use everything you own and love!)

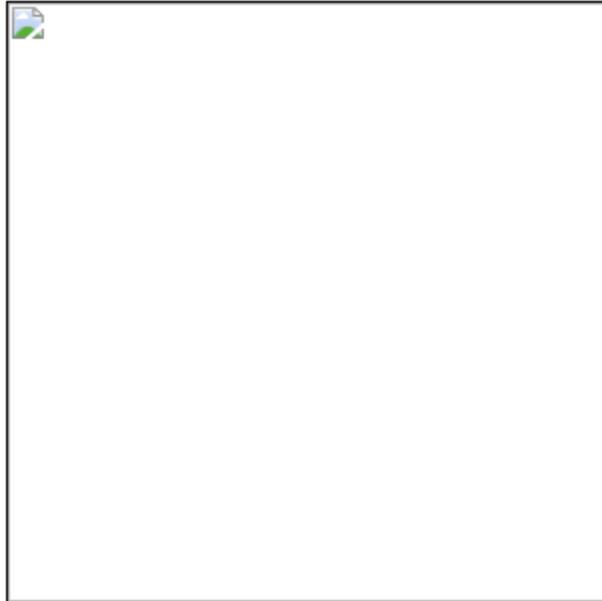
The CenterPiece

An earth-toned, bamboo runner down the center of the table could serve to anchor the whole table and set the tone for the individual place settings. Top the runner with an organic placement of varying heights of rich brown, cylindrical candles, some wrapped with one-and-a-half inch wide orange grossgrain ribbon. Rather than a large flower arrangement, or several smaller ones, freshly cut Chrysanthemum flower heads amongst the candles is a unique option.



Place Settings

Instead of the traditional two-plate setting you could choose to use large square charger plates as dinner plates. To keep the informal tone, simple brushed stainless steel flatware is favored over more ornate silver. Large linen squares, folded and loosely tied with a 2" wide, sheer burnished orange ribbon, and then placed in the center of the dinner plates is a creative look for the napkins. Present the water and wine glasses in contrasting colors, but they should share the same shape and silhouette. Dried leaves with the name of each guest written in a permanent magic marker, served as unique fall place 'cards'.



TIP: Colin is a big believer in seating arrangements. Not only does it eliminate the bustle when it's time to eat, but it serves to balance the energy at the table. Place your most outgoing guests at opposite ends to keep the conversation flowing.

The Advice: Forget what the etiquette books say about where and how the napkins are placed... or where the fork and knife should be set. Be confident, trust your own sense of style and let your personality shine through by injecting your favorite colors, or by introducing decorative objects from around the house. Play with the placement of all the elements, try to keep it interesting and aim for the unexpected. And remember, the rule is... there are no rules!

SETTING THE BUFFET

For a feast like Thanksgiving, Colin likes to combine the comfort of a sit-down dinner with the ease of a buffet. Begin and end the meal served at the table... soup to start, and dessert to finish... and serve the main course dishes from the buffet. As Colin always says, "It's very gracious to be able to serve your guests, even when having a buffet."

The Buffet Table

You don't need to own a sideboard to have a buffet. Just use a table that is accessible from both sides, has enough room to move around it and is convenient for serving and clearing. Make sure it's the right size table. If it's too large the food will get lost and your guests will think you're cutting back - at their expense, too small and the platters of food will look crowded and inaccessible. Finally, make sure the table is sturdy enough to handle the weight of all the elements. There's nothing worse than a shaky buffet table.

The Décor

Using a large decorative element on the buffet serves to anchor the table and helps tie in the entire theme of your dining area. A large vase abundantly filled with readily found branches and leaves as well as full-lengthstems of the same type of flowers used to decorate the dining table is one idea sure to impress your guests.

