



Christmas Surprise

A design-minded couple put delightful twists on a holiday palette, menu, and decor to create a memorable dinner party for people they love

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just call them Mr. and Mrs. Claus. An invitation to the home of Dallas-based designer Denise McGaha and her husband, Scott, for a Christmas gathering brings a flood of gifts for fortunate guests—the gift of comfort, the gift of food, and the gift of friendship.

“We want to deliver a special and elevated experience,” Denise says of the dinners that she and Scott carefully craft. “It’s important at this special time of the year.”

First, there’s the home itself. Like a gingerbread house adorned with peppermint sticks and gumdrops, the McGahas’ interiors offer plenty of eye candy. For this festive dinner, even a Christmas tree and greens weren’t enough to achieve the grandeur that Denise envisioned. She moved her dining room furniture into the living room (and vice versa) to set a cozy dinner scene in front of ►

Scott McGaha treats guests to individual versions of beef Wellington, the classic pastry-wrapped meat dish.



Roasted carrots, tossed in olive oil and lemon, and crispy Brussels sprouts with walnuts are served on Denise McGaha's vintage platters, while individual beef Wellingtons are presented on Blue Pheasant's "Gelsey" platter. "Danele" polished-gold serving utensils are from Blue Pheasant. On the tabletop, plum "Prunus" dinnerware is anchored by gold "Sol" service plates, both from Bernardaud. "Gwen" flatware is from Blue Pheasant; "W Wine" wineglasses in Fern are by Waterford. The tablecloth is made from "Piet Wisteria" linen with "Freeform Tape" in Dove, both from Schumacher.





menu

Holiday Dashers

Lobster Tartlets with Harissa
and Watercress

Roasted Celery and
Fennel Soup

Wild Mushroom-Stuffed Beef
Wellington with Roasted
Carrots and Brussels Sprouts

White Chocolate Layer Cake
with Orange Curd

MENU AND RECIPES BY
CHEF MARY PAYNE MORAN



Hand-painted macarons from We The Birds were a thoughtful hostess gift for the McGahas. Plum-color plates offer a twist on the traditional red-and-green holiday scheme. Crystal “Harmonie” double old-fashioned glasses from Baccarat heighten the aesthetic of the gin and blood orange-based holiday dasher that surprises with a peppercorn kick.



For recipes and a shopping list,
visit TraditionalHome.com/McGaha

the fireplace, its mantel bedecked with lush garland and a line of Christmas stockings awaiting a visit from St. Nick.

A porcelain dinnerware pattern of plum-color leaves inspired a fresh holiday palette that’s augmented by green from magnolia garlands, evergreen cuttings used for the centerpiece, and wine goblets that juxtapose clear crystal glasses. Vintage glass candelabra hint at the nostalgia of the season, while gold-tone flatware and chargers cap the tablescape with regal elegance.

“There’s something special about making the living room like a grand hall,” Denise says. “There’s more space, and we want our guests to feel comfortable, like they can stay all night.”

And stay they will. After Denise has set the scene, Scott executes a menu guaranteed to please. His cooking contribution is apropos, given his Instagram moniker—@chefdaddyscoti—a name bestowed by friends of his two children, whom he often cooks for when they visit. His lobster tartlets, given a bit of heat with a harissa sauce topping, roasted celery and fennel soup made extra seasonal with a garnish of chestnuts, wild mushroom-stuffed beef Wellington with port wine sauce and simple roasted carrots and crispy Brussels sprouts, and white chocolate layer cake delight with flavors that are sure to pull everyone into the spirit of Christmas. 🍷

