

# SPRUCE UP THE SEASON

WHEN IT COMES TO HOLIDAY DECORATING AND ENTERTAINING, THESE INTERIOR DESIGNERS KNOW A THING OR TWO ABOUT MAKING SPIRITS BRIGHT.



*By Rhonda Reinhart*

**DENISE MCGAHA**  
DENISE MCGAHA INTERIORS,  
DALLAS, TEXAS

**What's your favorite holiday tradition and why?**  
"I love driving the streets of Dallas looking at Christmas lights. The homes in the Park Cities have some of the most elaborate holiday decorations, and everyone has their windows open wide to share their interior decorating and trees as well."

**What are your must-haves for holiday entertaining?**

"Freshly pressed table linens, fresh flowers and greenery both on the table and on the mantel, and nonalcoholic options for younger children and those who don't drink. They should also feel like they can partake in the festive mood!"

**What's your favorite tree-trimming tip?**

"Buy 10 times the lights you think you need. You will always have strands that don't work for some reason, or you didn't calculate the number of strands needed. Nothing is worse than having to go back to purchase more and finding out they are out of the lights (and light temperature) you need."

**What's your go-to trick for outside-the-box holiday decorating?**

"I like to buy boxwood wreaths and allow them to dry after the holiday season. I have used them for several years in a row, and after they dry, I paint them gold or silver and continue to use them on

PHOTOGRAPHY: STEPHEN KARLISCH



DENISE MCGAHA





DENISE MCGAHA

my dining table as part of a centerpiece for spring holidays or reuse them the following year in my holiday decor.”

**Do you have any other holiday advice or customs you’d like to share?**

“Always provide a breakfast bread or muffin to send away with guests as their parting gift. If they arrive home after dining with you and need a little something sweet, or want to savor the night before with a cup of coffee the next morning, this is the most favorite way to carry the festive feeling into the next day.”

[DENISEMCGAHA.COM](http://DENISEMCGAHA.COM)

**COURTNEY ST. JOHN**

COURTNEY ST. JOHN STUDIO,  
VAIL, COLORADO

**What’s your favorite holiday tradition and why?**

“A favorite holiday tradition for our family is the buildup to and anticipation of our annual Christmas Eve dinner, which typically includes an amazing fondue, with as much extended family as we can gather. The special table setting we only use once a year provides that sense of tradition and cues the big celebration to come, and all the last-minute decorating and gift wrapping create that wonderful Christmas Eve energy.”

**What are your must-haves for holiday entertaining?**

“As an interior designer, the key must-have for holiday entertaining is a fun, festive, almost overly decorated house! If there was ever a time to go overboard, the holidays are it. In addition to obvious additions like a huge, lavishly decorated tree and stockings at the fireplace, we love to set up a Christmas village right at our entryway so guests enter into the spirit, enjoying it as they walk in. With all aspects of holiday décor, we find the enjoyment outweighs the effort.”



**What’s your favorite tree-trimming tip?**

“A favorite tree-trimming tip is to stay with a theme. I absolutely love vintage glass ornaments, and we have a fun collection we use every year. If you love using something that is special to you throughout your home, make sure it’s incorporated into your tree—more is truly

merrier in this case. Try plaids, go a little crazy with color, take cues from Mother Nature—keep in mind you get to add to it all the next year!”





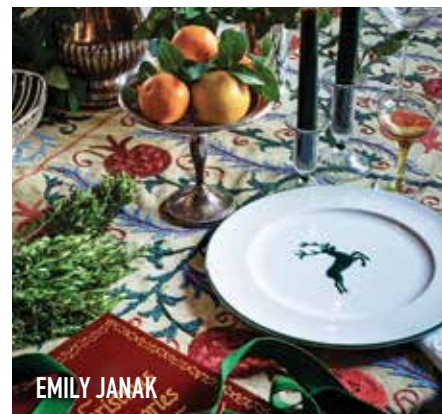
**What's your go-to trick for outside-the-box holiday decorating?**  
 "If you have a special collection of things, whether it is Christmas specific or not, it is a great opportunity to showcase it. We have a client who has an unbelievable collection of nutcrackers, for instance, and they are specially displayed and used every year with amazing results."

**Do you have any other holiday advice or customs you'd like to share?**  
 "We, as a family, commit to getting our Christmas tree the day after Thanksgiving so we can enjoy it for as long as possible!"  
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**EMILY JANAK**  
 EMILY JANAK INTERIORS,  
 JACKSON HOLE, WYOMING

**What's your favorite holiday tradition and why?**  
 "Growing up, my aunt would give us a place setting of classic Spode Christmas china each year. When we were little, we admittedly weren't that thrilled to get the same gift every holiday. Now, we are so thankful to have a full set of Christmas china for our holiday tables! My sister and I have continued the tradition for our own children. We get the boys silver julep cups, and the girls get a place setting of Gmundner Keramik's Green Deer. We hope they'll appreciate their collections as much as we do someday!"

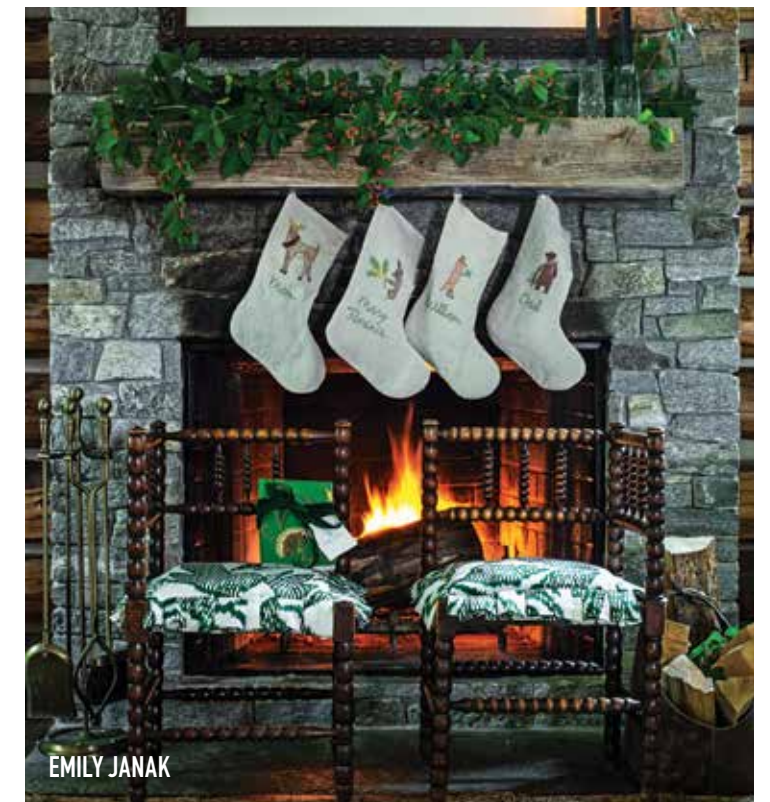
**What are your must-haves for holiday entertaining?**  
 "My husband and I really enjoy entertaining, so we love to pack our small home with guests around the holidays. I'm so glad I bought a beautifully leather-bound journal called 'Christmas Memories' from Biscuit Home a few years ago. I've been good about recounting the late nights spent around the fireplace in that journal. I look forward to reading and thumbing through special Christmas cards I save and keep as bookmarks in the journal each year."



**What's your favorite tree-trimming tip?**  
 "On special occasions, I keep the Champagne cork and make a note of the date of a birth, anniversary, etc. I make ornaments out of the corks for the tree."

**What's your go-to trick for outside-the-box holiday decorating?**  
 "Not everything has to be red and green at Christmas. I am all for using a beautiful textile like a vintage suzani as my tablecloth. It adds some personality, and I love that it might not be totally expected. I also find that mixing citrus in with my florals and garland adds to the palette and will generally last longer than flowers."

**Do you have any other holiday advice or customs you'd like to share?**  
 "Personalized gift tags are a must for me around the holidays. It's so easy to grab a bottle of wine and add your tag with a festive velvet ribbon on your way out the door to a holiday party."  
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