



## Little Things Make a Big Difference: Holiday Tips and Tricks from Lifestyle Expert Laurin Sydney

1. 'Tis the season to be jolly ... that is until 20 *unexpected* guests call at the last minute to say they are coming to your open house! Fortunately, Santa's love for milk and cookies is widespread. So instead of spending hours preparing time-consuming appetizers and main courses, assemble a holiday dessert bar, filled with such store bought goodies as fresh fruits, peppermint ice cream paired with candy cane crumbles, exotic teas, and a great premium coffee or two. You'll satisfy your guests' sweet teeth without a second of extra work.
2. Holiday leftovers and to-go bags are great, especially when the chef is good. But who says you can't jazz things up a bit by planning for the morning after, instead of for the next day's lunch? Try adding mini muffins, a small jar of jam, and filter full of your favorite Millstone coffee – like Pumpkin Spice or Holiday Peppermint – to create a great surprise for your early rising guests.
3. Move over, white Christmas! The hot trend for this year's holiday décor is color pairings in brown and light blue, silver and blush pink, and orange and yellow. Say goodbye to traditional red and green and say hello to a rainbow of color this season.
4. It's the thought that counts, right? Show that special loved one that you were truly thinking of them this holiday season by preparing a gift basket full of their favorite food items. Favorites of my friends and family include exotic wines and premium coffees in different flavors and varieties. For an extra special flare, include a wide assortment of products that will last throughout the year. With more than 40 varieties, Millstone Coffee makes it easy to extend the holiday cheer into the new year.
5. Memories of holiday gatherings should be filled with thoughts of good friends, great food, and thoughtful gifts, not embarrassing moments! To keep blunders at bay, such as forgetting the name of a colleague's spouse, provide festive name tags as your guests enter. As a hostess with the mostess, the simple application of self sticking name tags will lessen your attendees' embarrassing moments.
6. So you've decorated every inch of your home for the holidays, but forgot to "festivate" (festive and activate) your favorite four-legged elf? Place a little jingle bell on your doggies collar or decorate "Fido's" leash with red and white acrylic paint to resemble candy cane stripes.
7. Holiday entertaining should appeal to all senses; especially your nose, because it can be the most unforgiving. But holiday missteps such as a burnt turkey or overdone popcorn for your homemade garland can cause undesirable smells to permeate your home in a matter of minutes. To instantly replace the bad smell with one that's refreshing, place your favorite coffee beans in small bowls around your home just as you would potpourri. The more flavors and roasts you use, the better your home will smell.
8. The traditional, cute lil' gingerbread man will never go out of style. But, Mama never said you couldn't give him a lil' makeover and mate! Using store-bought icing in a tube, add a dress and long hair to create an original gingerbread woman. Serve them as a couple on your saucer next to a steamy aromatic cup of Millstone Cinnamon gingerbread coffee and you'll be in gingerbread heaven.

9. You don't have to be Michelangelo to create an easy holiday centerpiece that wows your guests. To do so, you'll need an inexpensive glass fishbowl, a tall plastic cup, a pound or two of whole coffee beans, and some flowers. Then follow these easy steps:
  - a. First, place the plastic cup in the center of the bowl and surround it with the whole bean coffee to the top of the glass.
  - b. Next, pour water in your cup and add the flowers.
  - c. Finally, stand back and admire your arrangement that appears to be magically growing out of the beans.

For an extra splash of holiday flair, use flavored beans such as Millstone Swiss Chocolate Almond or Holiday Peppermint to create a rich aroma for you and your guests.

10. Adding a dollop of freshly whipped cream to a cup of coffee or on any plain store-bought holiday cake can turn something simple into something special. To help your cream whip easily, place your metal bowl and two beaters in the freezer for at least an hour before whipping. If you are drinking unflavored coffee, try adding a sprinkle of cinnamon or peppermint extract to the cream before whipping. Or keep it simple and enjoy a premium flavored coffee such as Millstone.
11. The morning after entertaining can be both exhilarating and exhausting. So the next time you are invited to a holiday soiree, think ahead and offer your hostess a creative gift like a mini massage or pedicure at your local salon or day spa!
12. To easily create a gift wrap that is super special, add a little something extra to the gift box. For those new red cashmere gloves, attach a brand new matching red lipstick to your ribbon! If you are wrapping the "hottest new cookbook," attach some new cool measuring spoons. And for those adorable hand-painted coffee mugs, pour a variety of festive flavored holiday coffees, like Millstone Cinnamon Gingerbread and Pumpkin Spice into each cup before wrapping.
13. The sound of music during the holidays always stirs up cozy memories. Why not make some new memories with some new sounds from different cultures? You can easily go online, and purchase Chanukah, Christmas, and Kwanzaa music in all different languages. And as a special gift for guests, burn a copy of the CD for everyone to take with them.
14. Creative invitations can attract the attention of your guests and excite them about your holiday party. Some easy ideas include sending:
  - a. A candy cane to each guest with a note that says, "Come join us as we raise cane for the holidays!"
  - b. A marshmallow, graham cracker, and chocolate with a note that says, "Come gather around our fireplace and have "s'more" fun for the holidays".
  - c. A round unbreakable ornament with the words, "Come have a ball for the holidays!" written by you with a paint pen, laundry marker, or puff paint.

These are all little ideas with big impact!!