HOME

The Jenni Kayne Approach to Entertaining—A Foolproof Guide From Jenni Herself

FROM SERVEWARE STAPLES TO UNEXPECTED DIY TOUCHES

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COURTESY OF JENNI KAYNE

When it comes to effortless elegance, few people do it better than Jenni Kayne. Known for her minimalist, California-inspired aesthetic, Jenni's designs have become synonymous with timeless style—whether you're eyeing her impeccably tailored sweaters or swooning over her understated homewares. But what makes her truly stand out isn't just her knack for fashion or textiles; it's her ability to transform any space into an inviting sanctuary, especially when it comes to entertaining.

From intimate dinners to festive gatherings, Jenni has mastered the art of hosting in a way that feels polished yet approachable. Her secret? A thoughtful mix of elevated essentials, organic touches and the occasional splash of whimsy. And lucky for you, I had the chance to tap Jenni directly for all of her best tips and tricks for entertaining. Whether you're setting the scene for a cozy Christmas dinner or planning a whimsical outdoor brunch, this fool-proof guide has everything you need—from her go-to serveware and styling essentials to unexpected touches your guests will be talking about for weeks. Here's everything you need to know to host like a pro.

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Start With a Foundation of Entertaining Essentials

The first step to hosting like Jenni Kayne is building an arsenal of entertaining staples. According to a guide that she and her team put together: "Having a reliable supply of entertaining essentials makes it easy to host on the fly and mix and match place settings both formal and casual. First, take stock of what you already have—serving pieces, plates, silverware, etc.—then refer to this checklist to fill the gaps with what you need."

- **A Good Set of Linens:** Start with a neutral base: "A linen tablecloth or runner is the most versatile backdrop." For variety, she suggests having one neutral set and another with a bit of personality, like a subtle stripe.
- **Neutral Ceramics:** "Ceramics are endlessly useful for casual and formal tables alike." The best way to do this is by investing in four sets of ceramic bowls, salad plates and dinner plates—or scaling up to six or eight if you entertain often.
- **Silverware and Glassware:** "A nice cutlery set is one of the easiest ways to elevate your table." When it comes to glassware, her rule is simple: two per guest—one for water, one for wine or a cocktail.
- **Tabletop Decor:** "Candlesticks, tapered candles, and bud vases can make any table look immaculate." These elements allow you to play with height and texture, tying everything together beautifully.

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Create a Layered Look Without Overwhelming

Crafting a layered tablescape that feels full and curated without veering into over-the-top territory is one of Jenni's signature skills. The key, she says, is scale and simplicity. "I think it's important to make the most of your tabletop and really think about scale. I love letting my centerpiece fall across the table in a way that doesn't feel too manicured. I also think it's important to not be too precious with it—add what feels fun and celebratory."

One of Jenni's go-to techniques is focusing on organic greenery: "Sometimes I like to just focus on a single shade and let it lead the table and then add in festive touches to tie it all together." To that end, when it comes to floral arrangements, she prefers relying on the basics. "You don't have to create an intricate arrangement for your space to feel special and seasonal. Add a smaller ceramic vase on a table with flowers of different shades and sizes, or even place a single vase (like our Leather Rivet Vase) with quince branches in it for a tabletop moment that draws the eye."

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Add Unexpected Touches

For Jenni, the magic of a memorable gathering lies in the unexpected details that make your table personal and unique. “I’m such a fan of adding seasonal touches to a tabletop to make it feel more dressed up and personal,” she shared. “On my own holiday table, I’m adding pine cones and cinnamon sticks wrapped in ribbon, but you can really bring in anything to help tell your entertaining story.”

It’s also worth mentioning her advice on how she put together this cozy fall tablescape a few years back: “[I] kept it warm and inviting with thoughtful details around the table. For the cards at each setting, all you need is cardstock and ribbon. Cut enough rectangles for each guest using your preferred paper—enlist a friend with noteworthy handwriting or simply use a script that you can print. To add some extra flair, hole-punch circles on each side and string ribbon through. For the final touch, create floral bundles to accompany each setting using varieties like rosemary, bunny grass and gomphrena.”

Plus, she loves incorporating parting gifts inspired by the table to make the night even more memorable. “Let your guests bring the memories of the night home with DIY gifts that draw inspiration from your table. Not only do parting gifts add something special to the scene, but they also serve as fun crafts that the whole family can assemble.” One of her go-tos is handmade bath salts. “We brought in bath salts that Ripley made using sea salt, lavender, chamomile and calendula. Combine equal parts in a glass jar—Weck is a favorite of ours—and fasten the lid. Place one beside each plate for a festive and memorable setting.”

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Don't Skimp on Serveware

Serveware is one of the simplest ways to elevate your hosting game, and for Jenni, the right pieces strike the perfect balance between beauty and functionality. "Any and all of our Jenni Kayne Home stoneware pieces are an absolute must. From our everyday dishes to classic serveware, each piece is meant to look elevated on any tabletop," she says.

Her Staub cookware also makes frequent appearances. "I love that it doubles as serveware—it's functional and beautiful," she shares. The seamless transition from oven to table makes these pieces a go-to for everything from hearty casseroles to roasted vegetables. And of course, she says glassware is an essential worth investing in. "Having a glassware collection suited for all types of cocktails is imperative, especially during the holiday season," she explains. Her go-to? Versatile pieces that work equally well for celebratory champagne toasts or after-dinner Old Fashioneds.

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Recipes Jenni Loves for Every Season

Finally, when it comes to feeding a crowd, Jenni's approach is all about warmth and connection, favoring recipes that feel both thoughtful and approachable. "I always prefer to serve dishes family-style to make any gathering feel all the more welcoming and special," she says.

Her blog, Rip & Tan, is a treasure trove of seasonal recipes, including one of her favorites: sweet potato gnocchi. "It's the kind of dish that feels elevated but is still comforting, perfect for a cozy dinner party or holiday meal." She also recommends adding interactive elements to the menu to make the experience fun for guests. For example, a warm cider station or trays of freshly made apple cider donuts can add a seasonal flair that guests will rave about.

The key? Keep the menu simple but intentional. Focus on dishes that can be prepared ahead of time to minimize stress, and always, always serve family-style to encourage sharing and conversation. It's a hosting win-win.

3 Entertaining Essentials To Shop From Jenni Kayne