

October 29, 2014

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CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

Creative Entertaining: Spooktacularly Sophisticated

Posted: 10/29/2014 9:31 am EDT Updated: 9 minutes ago



Most of us think of trick-or-treating with kids when it comes to Halloween, or thumping night club parties filled with raunchily-costumed revelers. But there's no reason why you can't host a Halloween dinner for sophisticated grownups. Lose the kitschy marshmallow ghosts and goblins, the punchbowls filled with creepy garnishes like floating eyeballs. The end of October is a beautiful time of year, when the air is crisp and the foliage is at its spectacular peak. I can't think of a better time to gather with friends around a roaring fire.

Color. When it comes to your color scheme, break free from the traditional orange and black. Go for black and gold or black and silver for some drama and sparkle, and add some deep purple or red for accents.



Fabric. A simple piece of fabric can dramatically change the look of any table. I chose solid black, but you should feel free to choose any color or pattern that fits your palette and your theme.



Ambience. Dim the lights and use lots of candles. Vary their heights and feel free to use several different kinds, from votives, to candle sticks, to floating. A perfectly lit room instantly welcomes guests and makes them feel relaxed and right at home.



Table décor. Dump those boring old white dinner plates and find some that tell a story. Or design your own, using safe paints or decals.



Mix and match. Use jars, pots, or glasses as vases, vases as candle holders, and don't hesitate to enlist any other appropriate objects that you find around the house.



Glitter. Spray paint and glitter dresses up anything, from vegetables, pumpkins and gourds, to old candle sticks and wine bottles.



Wine. Forget about sugary punches. It's the perfect time of year for a full bodied vintage red wine. Start off the evening with appetizers and a crisp champagne, then crack open a Bordeaux or a Barolo with dinner and settle in for a cozy evening.



Treats. Forget the bowl of Kit Kats, Reese's Peanut Butter Cups and Snickers and buy some artisan cupcakes, cake pops or cookies designed and decorated in the holiday spirit.



Floral. Floral arrangements anchor the table. Keep the flowers in the same color palette and cut short so guests can see each other over them. Plan for two to three centerpieces for each 8-10 guests.



Entertainment. There's nothing better than a scary movie running in the background--think classics like *Nightmare on Elm Street* or *Halloween* or more offbeat fare like Tim Burton's *Frankenweenie* or Wes Craven's *Scream*!



So leave the kids behind and enjoy your own trick-or-treat!

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