



## DECORATING TIPS

### A SHOWER OF TABLETOP WHIMSY

*Ideas for throwing a wedding shower with an 18th-century twist*

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#### **A teacup full of posies...**

One of the cutest spring-entertaining ideas I've seen is the "teacup posey." With a few easy steps, you can create a fun individual arrangement for each of your guests. Simply take a teacup and wedge a piece of floral foam inside (for stability and to keep it from floating, you can attach the foam onto a floral prong). Then stick in an array of fresh flowers—add water to the foam until saturated, and you're done! You can use a matching set of your own teacups, of course, but another fun idea is to hit the local yard sales and stock up on second-hand ones so your guests take them home as charming party favors. Mixing and matching is encouraged, so be creative. For an 18th-century variation, try herbs mixed with wildflowers. Herbs were common wedding accessories because colonists believed them to have magical powers. Rosemary is my favorite because it adds great texture and smells so sweet. Whatever you choose, incorporate colors that match your china or the party-favor teacup, or that go with the meal.

#### **A rose petal martini...**

It's not actually a drink, but it makes an unbeatable table decoration. Just twist off fresh rose petals and pile them into martini glasses until they reach the brim. Top it off with a full rose bloom—instant and easy glamour for your table. You can also add some baby's breath, ladies' mantel, or dill as filler, and for even more texture and fun, pop in a cocktail stick with an olive on it! Roses are a very appropriate choice for Williamsburg-inspired entertaining, as they have long been associated with England and were one of the first flowers brought to America. Martha Washington kept a cookbook with recipes for rose petals, and they were often strewn on the floors of homes and churches for special occasions. White rose petals are especially sophisticated for wedding events, but any color will do depending on the look you're after. If you want to keep the theme going, sprinkle rose petals on your salad or dessert. You can make the "martinis" a few hours in advance, but keep them the fridge or another cool spot so they don't wilt.

#### **Here comes the theme...**

The trick to making a strong tabletop theme is to carry the theme throughout as much of your tabletop presentation as possible—whether you choose a large centerpiece or individual place-setting arrangements. One of my favorite ways to do this is to work in some greenery and flowers around the chargers. This gives you a colorful and often sweet-smelling foundation for each place setting! A nice opportunity with this idea is that you can easily use faux leaves or greenery as a base and then add in sprigs of a flower used in your other tabletop arrangements. When you're finished, the ring of greenery and color around each plate will be reminiscent of the fresh floral headdress worn by many 18th-century brides!

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**Party like it's 1799...**

The Williamsburg gentry often wound down at the end of the day with a “shrub”— a drink made from fruit syrups or purees mixed with gin or water in a simple sparkling glass. Sweet but still masculine, the drink continues to appeal to both men and women—making it the perfect drink for a couples’ shower and much more interesting than punch. You can serve shrubs with or without alcohol. One fun variation served in the Colonial Williamsburg’s taverns today is a mixture of cranberry and apple juice topped with a scoop of raspberry sorbet and a sprig of mint. This drink is so visually appealing that it can almost double as your place-setting arrangement! The idea of a “shrub party” will be unique and intriguing to your guests, and the drink will come as a tasty treat. Served with traditional Virginia fare of ham biscuits, a fresh fruit plate, and some cheeses, you have the makings of a wedding party with real history!