

# Spring to the table

By SANDRA SHIELDS  
Epoch Times Staff

Entertaining is the perfect way to keep us connected with family and friends and to celebrate special occasions. So why not honour the arrival of spring with an outdoor-themed luncheon or dinner party.

To set the mood with a touch of the garden, bring some charming outdoor elements into the home, using the simplicity of nature as a resource for indoor decorating and entertaining.

## Centerpieces and tablescapes

Clusters of flowers, complementary textiles and decorative art can transform any room or table.

Be resourceful and clever and start with simple textures for the table that can be found at thrift stores or garage sales. A length of remnant fabric such as burlap or linen placed down the centre of the table will provide a backdrop that showcases the centerpiece. A soft green tablecloth creates a casual look, pastel pink or yellow a light-hearted pretty look, and traditional white linen a sophisticated look.

Blooming plants in terra cotta pots or single flowers in different-sized and -shaped vases placed in the centre of the table create a colourful tablecape.

Using only one type of flower such as mini carnations or tulips keeps the cost down. Also, using assorted small vases keeps the amount of flowers to a minimum, creating a landscape of small bouquets while giving good value for



**CHARMING AND INEXPENSIVE:** Mini white carnations and spring ribbon create lovely nosegay posies in vitamin containers repurposed as vases. SANDRA SHIELDS/THE EPOCH TIMES

your dollar.

Incorporate outdoor elements into the centerpiece for a natural look using a variety of leaves and twigs for texture. Position smooth stones or bark down the centre of the table with clusters of moss (available from craft stores), and add votive candles to create a soft, warm glow for an evening meal.

A simple option is to grow lush wheat grass in small containers and surround them with mini daffodils and crocuses. For a monochromatic theme, choose only one flower colour or simply use all greenery collected from the garden or from a walk in the woods.

Tall cherry blossom or pussy willow branches on a sideboard or serving table create an easy, elegant look with very little effort.

## Place cards and favours

- Poke a flower the same as those used in the centerpiece through cardstock which has each guest's name printed on it. Place the stem into a water pick at the back to keep the flower fresh and the card upright.

- A nosegay of fresh herbs with lemon thyme, rosemary and sage tied with raffia makes a dainty—and fragrant—presentation and keepsake to take home.

- Roll napkins into a cone shape and tie with a pretty ribbon and a nametag. Fill the cone with a flower or chocolate treat.

- At each table setting, place a miniature pot of bright primroses or violas with a nametag tucked in.

- Give a packet of garden seeds for a take home gift.

## Focus on the food

With the advent of spring, farmers markets will soon be starting up, providing an abundance of fresh ingredients for a light and healthful menu. Plain white serving platters show off food more than coloured or decorated ones.

Start the meal with a salad of tender baby greens with radish, cucumbers, pea shoots, and edible flowers. Serve baked ham or grilled lamb chops seasoned with rosemary and thyme, roasted red potatoes, steamed asparagus and clover honey glazed carrots. Add some heirloom baby tomatoes for a vibrant, colourful menu. Dessert can be as simple as fresh strawberries and crème fraiche.

Beverages should be simple and refreshing. Have a supply of non-alcoholic blended fruit juices and punches with sparkling soda. Always have water as part of your drink selection adding a splash of colour with lemon or lime slices and mint leaves. Fresh berries frozen in ice cubes will brighten drinks.

## Children's table

Children won't mind sitting away from the adult's table when there is a table decorated especially for them. Use paper tablecloths and napkins for easy clean up.

Make an edible art centerpiece with decorated flower cookies on sticks and skewers of fresh fruit placed in a ceramic pot.

Write each child's name on a small smooth stone at each place setting or shred brown paper and form nests with baby blue candy coated chocolate eggs to set at each place.

In the end, spring entertaining can be simple or elaborate depending on how much time is invested. Either way, a spring celebration can create a fun time for everyone.



**SPRING'S ARRIVAL:** Nature's beauty unfolds. CHRISTIAN SCHLEGEL/THE EPOCH TIMES

## The light of spring on the Emerald Isle

By BRIDGET HARRIS  
Epoch Times Staff

Gerard Manley Hopkins began his poem "Spring" with the words:

*Nothing is so beautiful as Spring—*

*With weeds, in wheels, shoot long and lovely and lush;*

*Thrush's eggs look little low heavens, and thrush*

*Through the echoing timber does so rinse and wring*

*The ear, it strikes like lightning to hear him sing;*

*The glassy peartree leaves and blooms, they brush*

*The descending blue; that blue is all in a rush*

*With richness: the racing lambs too have fair their fling.*

Penned in 1918, this description of the arrival of spring is powerful in expressing the energy and vitality that the awakening of the first of the earth's seasons brings.

In Ireland, the arrival of spring was traditionally celebrated on February 1st. The celebrations were in the context of the power of light and its effect on our inner selves and

on the spiritual uplifting we attain through the power of light. The diocese of Kildare and Loughlin is dedicated to Saint Lazarus and Saint Bridget. Both these names have much the same meaning—Lazarus translated means 'the power of light' and Bridget means 'shining light.'

February 1st is also known as

**Every aspect of nature is bright and energetic, and the rivers are cascading along, accepting the overflow of water as a result of recent heavy rain.**

that the light of spring had arrived and there was brightness ahead.

To witness the Irish countryside in spring, and no doubt elsewhere as well, is most beautiful and uplifting. Ready to get on with the nature's routine of reproduction, birds are especially busy; they have nest sites and partners to find, bird songs to sing and predators to fight off as they go about the many aspects of their spring routine.

There is much evidence of emerging life, including the growth of flowers—already the gardens are white with snowdrops and buds are beginning to peep out from within their outer layer, no doubt checking out the light and warmth. Every aspect of nature is bright and energetic, and the rivers are cascading along, accepting the overflow of water as a result of recent heavy rain.

Gerard Manley spent part of his mission as a Jesuit priest in Ireland. So it may have been Ireland he was thinking of when he wrote "Nothing Is So Beautiful As Spring." Once again the light of spring and new beginnings are here for all to enjoy. With joy in our hearts we can look to the future and experience the beauty that is enfolding us.

Candlemas Day. On this day in the past, (especially in rural pre-electricification times), people would eat their evening meal without lighting the candle and the family would sing "On Candlemas day throw candles and candle-holders away and eat your supper in the light of the day." This was another way of confirming



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