

Making a good Thanksgiving impression

Written by Marcia Humphrey

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My girlfriend, who's more of a sister, recently called from Atlanta in a frenzy. I could hear it in her voice. "Missy, what you doing?" she asked. She went on to tell me that she was just leaving the furniture store, where she'd been shopping for the perfect new family-room sectional that would comfortably seat all the out-of-town in-laws expected for Thanksgiving. She wanted to get a second opinion about her choice, so I went online to the store's website.

While the sectional was nice, it really seemed too big for her space, so I gave her my honest opinion. Over the next couple of days, I provided my long distance decorating consultation, and then my sister had a sudden epiphany; all the stress about the seating was self-imposed and unnecessary. The sofa she already owned, although well used by her family of six, was still in good shape; it just needed cleaning. It even had removable, washable covers on the cushions. In addition, she concluded that instead of making a rash decision under pressure, it would be much wiser to work with what she already had. She decided to take her time, save up, and buy the sofa she really wanted.

Are you stressing over the imperfections of your home as you prepare for Thanksgiving visitors? Here are just two words of advice; quit trippin! Consider the following free ways to impress your guests and give them that warm, fuzzy feeling when they walk in the door.

Clean Up. Okay, I know this sounds pretty basic, but sometimes the obvious must be stated. Don't worry about making it immaculate. Grab a laundry basket for power cleaning and take it from room to room gathering up things that don't belong and putting them in their proper spot. Do however, make sure those bathrooms are well cleaned and have a new can of disinfectant/deodorizing spray on hand. If the food is especially good, this room is sure to get a lot of action! Light a scented candle an hour in advance of dinnertime and you'll be all set.

Freshen Up. This is perhaps the most important rule of all. Get some rest before your holiday guests arrive (I'm talking to myself right now)! There is nothing worse than a cranky, moody host. Avoid the temptation to stay up too late several nights in a row. You will enjoy your guests so much more. In addition, a well-rested host will not go bananas when the inevitable happens; little Jr. spills his drink on the carpet. (Serve only the clear stuff to the kids and leave

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the Tahitian Treat Fruit Punch for the grown folks.)

Eat Up. Since everyone will partake in the eating, don't be afraid to ask for help with the cooking. Consider asking your local guests if they would bring their favorite side dish to share-they'll feel good about being asked. Even your out-of-town guests will probably be glad to join you in the kitchen and assist by chopping onions and bell peppers, and chatting.

While we all want our homes to look nice when holiday visitors arrive, it's not where the true value lies. Our family and true friends are always most impressed with the warmth and sincerity of our hospitality. In fact, they will be so busy eating, laughing, and fellowshiping they won't even notice any of the insignificant projects and purchases that kept you stressing. Be Thankful and Enjoy!

Marcia Humphrey is an interior decorator and home stager who specializes in achieving high style at low costs. A native of Michigan, she and her husband, Lonnie, have three children.