

FASHION PLATES

SET THE SCENE TO COMPLEMENT YOUR CUISINE

By Stacey Rowe

Styled by Shannon Hookway; photography by Kate Melton



Entertaining guests in a clever way can sometimes be a daunting task. For those who are artistically challenged, the idea of DIY décor can be overwhelming and for those on a budget, the thought of spending a fortune on the backdrop for one evening simply won't do. It's helpful to know a creative person like Shannon Hookway, who spends her day as a production designer and stylist. In her free time, she paints beautiful art and designs jewelry while also managing to entertain her friends and those of her three daughters. According to Hookway, good props for a set—or in this case, a room—are akin to exceptional accessories for an outfit, and one can repurpose household items that are readily available. Think about transforming a favorite look with a great belt or earrings and do the same for a table setting to create ambience.

Hookway chose art and graphic design as her college major. She has also acted throughout her life, which led her to one of her first jobs as a film assistant. While spending her days in the set design truck on that film, she decided to pursue production and set design as a career. Working in advertising helped her develop additional skills in wardrobe, hair, and makeup styling. Lately her passion for food styling has paired her with local photographers for editorial shoots. Here, with staff photographer Kate Melton, she provides four possible themes constructed out of elements she already had in her home.



Dessert en blanc

For a clean daytime look that could set the stage for an intimate bridal shower or a boozy brunch with buddies, Hookway uses a white tablecloth, white plates, and floral accents and adds a pop of citrus color and flavor to tie it all together. “I love baking cakes for shoots,” she says, “they always look pretty and appetizing.” This look pairs a sunny yellow lemon cake with a fresh “strawberry-blond” twist on a mimosa by adding hints of strawberry and lemonade to champagne.





Red Wine
Fruit
Sangria



Suburban cowboy

Serving as the local American Advertising Awards (ADDY) cochair for the Rochester Advertising Federation, Hookway likely still has cowhide and boots on the brain from the award ceremony's 2016 theme, Grit and Glory. For a casual appetizer night with a friend, think less spaghetti western and more mesa-on-the-mesa"with warm southwest colors and kicky cuisine. Hookway pulls a smaller kitchen table into her red dining area and adds a few hints of turquoise and green to complete the look. Nosh includes a colorful cowboy caviar salsa and a saddle-stiff red sangria with fruit displayed in a beverage hostess in her cozy hutch.





Bohemian craft-sody

Hookway's love of art and stockpile of supplies has generated a few Rochester Contemporary Arts Center (RoCo) 6x6 parties and craft nights in her home. For a comfortable girls' night in full of sipping, dipping, and general naan-sense, easy finger food includes homemade hummus and guacamole paired with naan bread and a spicy spiked iced tea. She pulls a coffee table from her living room and adds gilded accents, twinkling white lights, and Moroccan-inspired pillows for floor seating.







Into the wood

For more elaborate meals, Hookway keeps her wooden dining room table in place and chooses a setting of earthy green colors, woods, and mixed metals. A tossed salad sits in a large dark wooden bowl with wooden serving utensils, and a rustic blend of potato and yam fries are presented in a small metal bucket. The main course is a grilled open-face sandwich on a wooden board with artichoke, red pepper, greens, and a sprinkling of cheese. For a refreshing beverage accompaniment, she dresses up a moscow mule with seasonal berries served in a traditional copper mug.



A lover of color and texture, Hookway encourages looking at one's space as a blank canvas: "Take away clutter so you can bring in something fresh like tables and chairs from another room, incorporating scarves and fabric swatches or switching out curtains." The same goes for food preparation—add subtle ingredient twists to basic recipes to make things more attractive and flavorful. Like any artistic soul, her muses are often ideas she

has accumulated over the years and keeps tucked away in the back of her mind—or what she describes as her inspiration vault. "I like to keep a few things to myself, just for me," she continues, "then I'll pull them out of my hat when the moment strikes!" For those who have worked with her, the result is exactly that: magic. ⁽⁵⁸⁵⁾

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