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# Victoria

ROMANTIC LIVING / INSPIRING WOMEN

93 entertaining ideas  
secrets of inviting rooms

EXCLUSIVE: NEW DECOR AT  
EDITH WHARTON'S HOUSE

a storybook teddy-bear party

*Come for*  
*Thanksgiving*  
OUR BOUNTIFUL FEAST

NOVEMBER 2002  
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**T**HE VIRTUAL HOSTESS PRESIDING OVER THIS delightful little lunch party has strings of worry beads beside her place setting. But, of course, she has nothing to fret about. Her decorator, Mark Epstein, has seen to everything in a dining room artfully planned to foster calm, comfort and conversation.

Mark created the luminous room, with its serene Scandinavian feel, for this year's Hampton Designer Showhouse in Water Mill, New York. To help guests settle in for the afternoon, he's placed them in the embrace of Louis XVI-style armchairs and at a round table, a shape that's never been surpassed as a conversation facilitator. The table is a simple white-painted piece of no particular provenance, whose glossy surface, like the leather of the chairs, takes spills in stride. Even at dinner parties (when Mark envisions the light of the eighteenth-century Italian chandelier amplified by votives set around the table in chunks of sparkling quartz crystal), he'd still refuse to submit to what he calls "the tyranny of the tablecloth."

Flexing the premise that dining rooms permit a degree of fantasy out of place in, say, a living room, Mark heightened the dreamy soufflé atmosphere with murals whose hypnotic curves were borrowed from Matisse cutouts. The murals' aqueous, blue-gray tones triggered those of the casually luxurious silk curtains, sisal carpet and leather chairs (dyed to match the curtains). To keep the silvery mood going, he slipped in a sideboard in icy brushed steel. Shots of puckery green—in the cabbage plates, in the 1960's geometric print on the chair backs and in the kind of handy little telephone table the Duchess of Windsor used everywhere—are the room's wake-up call.

Pass the crabmeat-stuffed tomatoes, please. *✍*

For additional information, see page 100.



**THE MATISSE INFLUENCE**

is brought out with lithographs by the artist (from the Hubert Gallery) and subtle murals by decorative painter Jennifer Haxker. The nineteenth-century French garden chair, left, is from Frederick P. Victoria & Son, Inc. The Gustavian clock, right, is from Lorin Marsh; the chandelier, from Lou Malotta Inc.; the fabric on the backs of the Christopher Norman chairs, by Ellen Ford; curtains silk from Old World Weavers; green snakeskin table from Mary Fossberg; and sisal floor covering by Stark Carpets.

# GATHER AROUND

Everything about this dining room—from the soothing colors to the simple round table and the soft little chairs—is designed to invite lingering.

PHOTOGRAPHED BY MICHELE ARNAUD / PRODUCED BY MARY BALTZ

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