

Published July 1st, 2015

Stylish Solutions Summer Entertaining

By Ann McDonald



Using napkin rings is a great way to hide any fabric size imperfections. Photos courtesy Couture Chateau LLC

your year-round décor. I always keep the following on hand: beige linen, white linen, beige boucle, white boucle, sage green velvet and white velvet. Yes, I like to entertain!

2) Arm yourself with the best quality pinking shears you can afford and hide them from your family. Gingher, KIA and Fiskers are the brands I use. Test-drive different brands. We all have our favorites and, yes, I do hide them.

You can now buy fabric shears in more than the traditional zigzag, but I like the zigzag for this particular DIY because you will want a slightly frayed edge to work with.

3) Find a large flat surface and start cutting out napkins and table runners. I use my dining table or the floor in my studio. Mark with a straight edge that is long enough to cover the entire width. I like using a level I picked up at Home Depot because it keeps my lines straight. I overlay a long flat-edge ruler as well.

Bolts of upholstery weight fabric are typically 48 to 54 inches wide. That means you can get two napkins across at 25 square. I typically opt for only two across, since the better, more natural fabric, when washed, will have a lot of shrinkage and thread pulling from the zigzag-cut edge, which you want.

Do the same for cocktail napkins and table runners or place mats.

4) Wash them. Yes, I said take your beautiful upholstery weight fabric and wash it. When upholstery fabric is shipped, it contains protective sealers to ward off bugs and if it's rated for commercial application, there will be additional fire retardant, even with the most eco-friendly brands. We always wash fabrics twice before using in applications like this, especially if we are making custom linens to be used near food.

You will also want to add softener if fabric is particularly stiff. If the fabric is still stiff after washing, add a softener to the dryer. By placing the fabric cuts in the dryer for a bit, the threads will work their way out - a good thing! Remove when slightly damp and press flat with your hands. Remove the gaggle of threads (don't panic) and let dry. Start over again by trimming any odd sides where a mass of thread may have pulled away during the wash and dry cycle, wash again and dry them again until damp. Flatten with hands to dry.

These napkins and runners will be ready to use as is. No sewing. One of the keys when setting

We've all been here: The weather clears, the summer sun works its wonders and it's time for a party! Visions of the perfect linen shift, coordinating sandals and jewelry, gorgeous table tops, matching flowers, a signature drink, invitations, friends enjoying a summer get together ... you can see the entire event in your head.

You even pick out a theme and color palate. Not too kitsch, just jaunty enough to serve as an outlet for your creative juices.

Then it hits: The realization that your 'Ideal Summer Party' will clash like the titans with your year-round décor.

The funeral dirge plays in your head. You wonder do I have time to redecorate the entire house before the party? No, you don't. However, the following are some of our insider tips to make it all work.

1) Buy a 30-yard "half bolt" of fabric. Choose a neutral fabric in linen or cotton that works with

your table is to use napkin rings. They will conceal any odd sizing issues and the fact that you aren't ironing this time.

We also use this method for chair bows, napkin ties, table bows and container covers in coordinating fabrics. For large-scale container covers, you will need "60-yard piece goods" (an industry term for wholesale fabric bolts).

What is accomplished? You have just neutralized your year-round décor. By dampening the visual of your normal décor with weighty upholstery neutrals (nubby linens, velvets, boucle) you make room for a visual line of focus - straight through to your theme.

When you enter your space, your eyes need places to focus and rest. If they are resting and registering on the weighty neutral, your party theme colors can pop.

5) Bring your theme color in. Match flowers, candles and your drinks (I've shared this tip before but it is one of my all-time favorites), and stage and set out on top of your coordinating neutrals. Remember to dress your beverage carts or counters where your signature drinks will start with the same neutral.

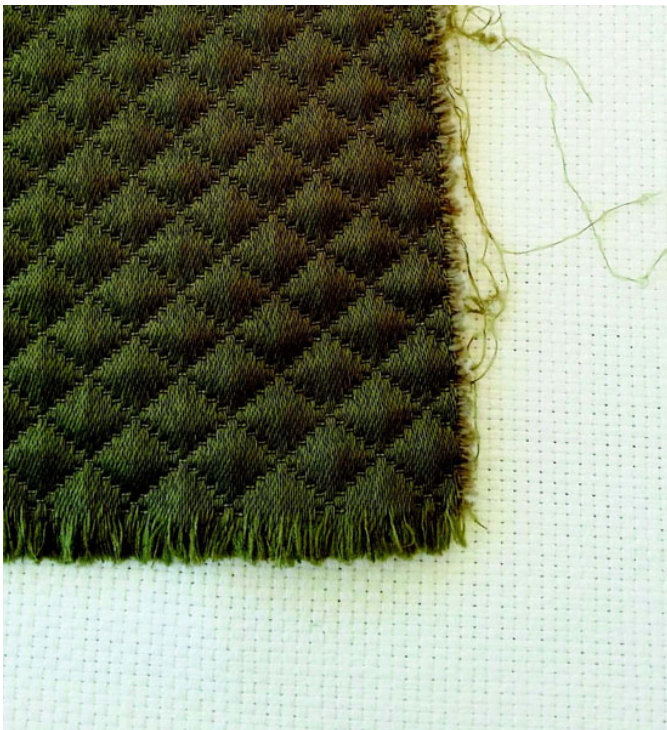
Your theme or color is concentrated on pieces that leave once the party is over and you now have a neutral set of linens for a fraction of the cost of buying retail (unless, of course, you opt for expensive fabric, which I have been known to do).

Let me know how it goes! And if you don't want to do DIY, give us a call. Our fabulous workrooms have made some gorgeous linen sets for clients including dust covers for tablecloths and custom boxes for napkins.

Share this with a friend planning a party and have a beautiful summer, stylish suburbanite.

Make sure you check out the blog and sign up for an invite to our Summer Inventory Clearance Sale at <http://couturechateau.com/designer-clearance/>.

Blessings!



Threads will work their way out of fabric as you wash it, which is good.



This napkin set was made out of designer fabric and napkin rings from the Gift Show in North Carolina.



Tools for this project include a level, pinking shears and a ruler.



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