

Smells Like Holiday Spirit

During the holiday season, what could be more nostalgic than the wafting aroma of pine trees or apples and cinnamon?

Unfortunately, many types of household cleaning products, air sprays and plug-ins, candles and even potpourri rely upon synthetic fragrances derived from non-renewable petroleum. These chemicals may, in turn, produce hazardous airborne substances called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), which contribute to poor air quality and sinus irritation.

So, when looking for a bit of ambience, go natural.

BLEND YOUR OWN POTPOURRI ▶

from real cedar chips (yes, the pet store kind), lavender buds, herbs and spices, or even a bar of all-natural soap. If the mix is too fine for a basket, use a tin or tie it all up in a pretty scrap of cloth and put it in a drawer (more cost effective than a store-bought sachet!).

IF YOU LOVE SCENTED CANDLES, look for

those made with beeswax or soy (not petroleum-based paraffin) and natural essential oils. Try Zum Glow's Soy Candle in frankincense and myrrh.

\$15, indigowild.com

BREW A POT OF HERBAL TEA. Or, before a get-together, put a few cinnamon sticks and cloves in a pan of water and simmer for the aroma.

BAKE SOMETHING. It doesn't have to be a turkey dinner – even a few potatoes or baked apples and cinnamon smell delicious. (Bonus: They taste great and are good for you, too.)



DID YOU KNOW?

Long appreciated for its lovely scent, lavender has also been found to calm and soothe when inhaled.

The Perfect PARTY!

Planning to host or attend a party this season? Here's how to handle some sticky situations.

HOST:

YOU DON'T KNOW YOUR GUESTS' DIETARY PREFERENCES.

"Always ask," says Lizzie Post, coauthor of *Emily Post's Great Get-Togethers* (William Morrow, 2010). "It's the mark of a good hostess." If asking isn't doable, offer a variety of dishes to accommodate everyone from vegetarians to those with food allergies. Post recommends test-driving recipes ahead of time.

YOU'RE PRESSED FOR TIME.

Tempted to send invitations via email? Resist. Instead, write out or print the invitation, address it by hand and send it through the mail. "I know it's 2010, but a hand-written invitation mailed well in advance of a party lets recipients know they weren't last-minute thoughts," says Kathie Martin, an Alabama-based etiquette consultant who is founder and president of The Etiquette School of Birmingham.

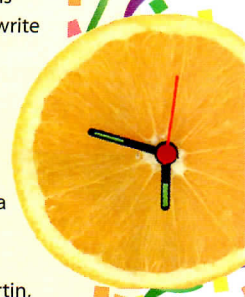
GUEST:

YOU EAT CLEAN, BUT THE MENU IS ANYTHING BUT.

Eat what you can – quietly. "It's important not to make your hostess feel uncomfortable about what she serves," says Arden Clise, a Seattle-based business etiquette consultant.

YOU'RE A VEGAN.

Many menus include vegetarian options, but vegans aren't so lucky. "Vegan diets are considered extreme," says Susan Callender, a Boston-based etiquette expert who has been dubbed the city's most fashionable caterer. "Advise the hostess of your preferred diet ahead of time and offer to bring an entrée to share."



Have Your Say

We want to hear about the clean recipes you wish to see on our pages.

What classic dish have you always wanted to revamp? Do you have a favorite meal that is far from clean? Be part of *Clean Eating's* Readers' Choice recipe feature in June 2011 by casting a vote. Email your recipe pick to myrecipe@cleaneatingmag.com.

