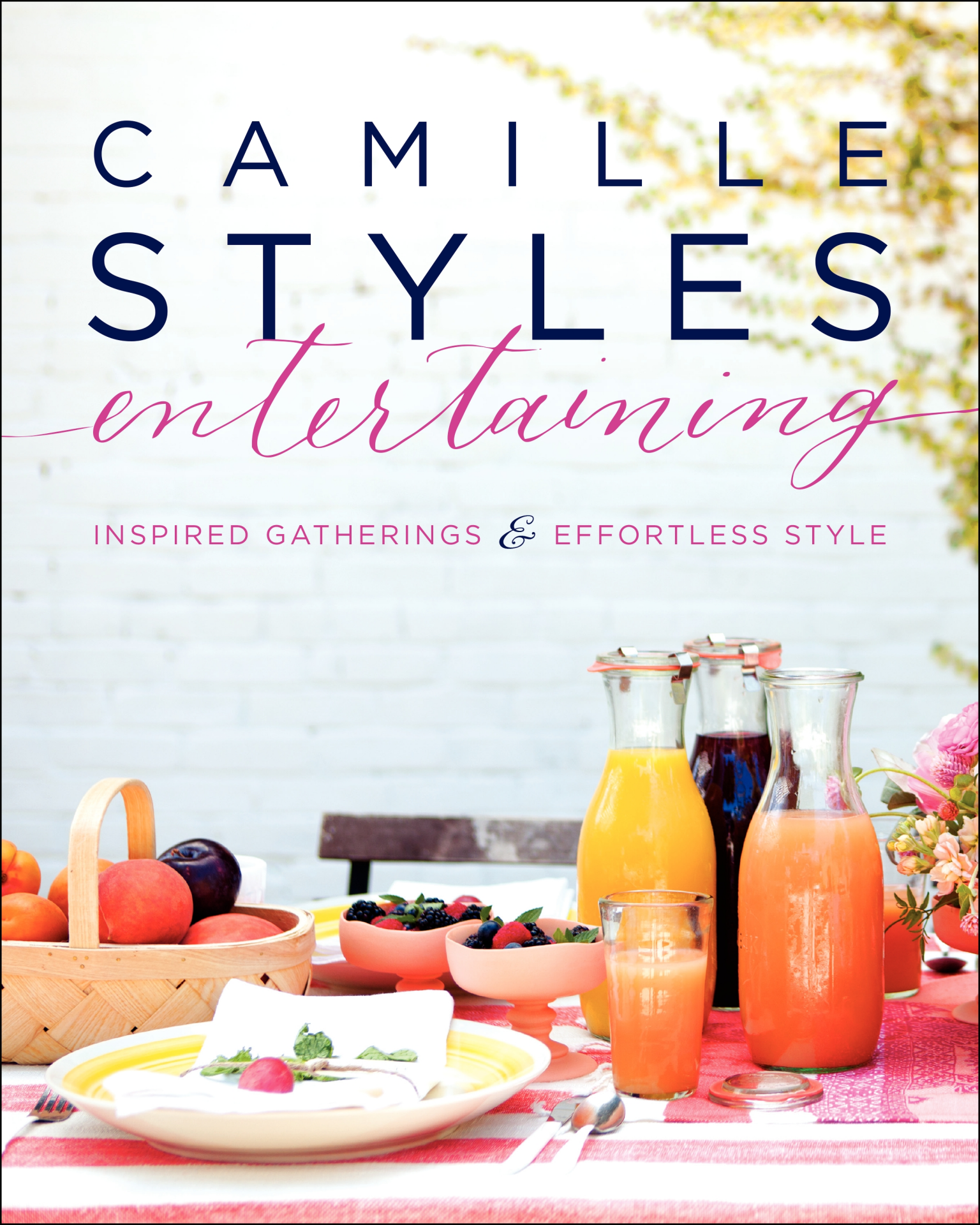
# CAMILLE STYLES *entertaining*

INSPIRED GATHERINGS & EFFORTLESS STYLE





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INSPIRED GATHERINGS & EFFORTLESS STYLE

Photographs by Buff Strickland

WILLIAM MORROW

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We could see the excitement as their faces registered that this was a kick-off-your-heels-and-break-out-the-tequila kind of party!





# CELEBRATE THE EVERYDAY

On a recent sticky-hot July evening in Austin, my husband, Adam, and I invited a few of his friends from work to join us for a casual dinner on our back patio. We wanted to keep the vibe laid-back and fun while marking a big milestone for their company, so I appointed a "shorts and sandals" dress code and set out to infuse the occasion with a few simple but surprising details that guaranteed it would be a night to remember.

Thirty Mexican prayer candles, five platters of build-your-own-tacos, four pitchers of frozen margaritas, and one donkey piñata later, we had all the makings of a south-of-the-border fiesta. Adam cranked up the mariachi tunes on the speakers, and as our guests showed up (perhaps expecting just another "work dinner"), we could see the excitement as their faces registered that this was a kick-off-your-heels-and-break-out-the-tequila kind of party!

That unforgettable evening perfectly illustrates my secret to modern, stress-free entertaining: keep the focus on just a handful of details that pack a major punch and leave a lasting impression in guests' minds. It all starts with creating the *vision* for your party: the overarching theme that will drive all other decisions and serve as the launching pad for the creative details that make a party unforgettable. The vision will determine the look and feel of your invitation, decor, items on a menu, guests' attire, drinks that are poured, and music that's played.

But don't think for a second that I wait around for life's big milestones to delve into my inspiration files and come up with a great idea for a party. Even if it's "just" a cozy weekend dinner at home, I love to take a few moments to craft a vision that will elevate a normal night into something fun and unexpected. When the weather's nice, I may throw a swath of white linen on our patio table and place a scattering of glass votives and a few branches clipped from our lemon tree in the center and then set each place with my favorite handmade ceramic dishes, textured linen napkins, and stemless wineglasses for a look that's completely unfussy yet transports us to a wine country setting for the evening. Northern Cali cuisine like grilled fish with seasonal vegetables, chilled glasses of Sauvignon Blanc, and a couple scoops of sorbet are in keeping with the vibe . . . and, just as important, make for almost zero prep time in the kitchen. These small gestures are the spice of life, and they're at the heart of my philosophy to celebrate the everyday, living each moment as something worth remembering.

When I got married, I decided not to register for special-occasion china, instead choosing beautiful dishes that could grace the dinner table nightly. I don't wait for parties to break out my





favorite table linens, and neither should you! After all, throwing them in the washing machine at the end of the evening takes very little effort, and the enjoyment gained from sitting down to a beautiful table far outweighs it. At some point in my life, I realized that all the "stuff" we own is temporary—it can be lost or broken, and as the saying goes, you can't take it with you!

So while I'm not always successful at it, I do my best to seize the day and let the beautiful items I own bring me joy *right this minute* instead of waiting for a "worthy" opportunity. We all deserve to be surrounded by beauty, and if something breaks, it can be fixed; if it's lost, it can be replaced. Even if you're spending an evening solo eating Chinese takeout, set the table with *real* dishes and glassware, pour yourself a glass of wine, and savor a good meal. It's moments like these that set us on a path toward living the life we dream of—a life in which we're respecting our bodies with nourishing food, nurturing our souls by making time for our passions, engaging our senses with beauty, and expressing our love to family and friends by inviting them to create memories together.

There's no good reason to wait for another day to start living like you want to live. Think of this book as your guide to the simple details and creative shortcuts that make everyday moments feel special, even in the midst of our busy, schedule-packed lives. After reading it, I hope you'll be inspired to invite a few friends over, and instead of slaving away at the stove all day, get creative by thinking of a few fun details that'll make it special and leave you feeling energized and excited when the doorbell rings. "Entertaining" can happen with 100 people or just one—it's really just a state of mind that says, "Today is worthy of celebrating. Let's make it fun!"

Camille


FRANK L. BROOKS
GOLDEN
GREAT
PLAYS

CHAPTER

# 1

# FINDING BEAUTY

## >>>>>>>>>> IN THE DETAILS <<<<<<<<<<

For as long as I can remember, I've sought out—and delighted in—beauty in the details. As a little girl, I collected stacks of binders full of images that inspired me, visited art museums with my parents (falling in love with the great Impressionists), and sketched and memorized the names of all my favorite flowers. As I got older, I discovered that beauty could just as easily be found in a recipe where all the components came together in perfect harmony, a song whose lyrics seemed to speak directly into the heart, and best of all, in the moments shared with my family and friends that left me feeling cherished and cared for. I developed a passion for seeking out these moments of beauty in everyday life, and though I had no idea at the time what it would look like, I knew I wanted my life's work to somehow involve creating beauty for myself and others to enjoy.

My first real job after college was at a catering company in Austin. It was a demanding and sometimes stressful role, but I couldn't have asked for a better education in event planning and production, menu design, and staying calm in the face of immense pressure (and sometimes even potential disaster!). I did it all: served wedding cake to five hundred people, came up with a quick solution when the power to the portable toilets went out, even passed hors d'oeuvres at swanky cocktail parties when we were short on waiters. I developed the ability to think on my feet, the gift of calming the occasional bridezilla, and a team-player mentality that taught me no job was too small or too menial.

Camille



I really wholeheartedly loved working in catering, even embracing the long hours that came with it, but eventually I got a great opportunity to plan corporate events for one of my clients at an advertising agency. This job was also life changing, though in ways I could never have foreseen. It was there I met Adam, the agency's cofounder, and a few years later we were married (and now we have a one-year-old daughter, Phoebe!). He was my biggest advocate from the start, giving me the confidence, courage, and business advice I'd need to strike out on my own at age twenty-five and launch my own planning company, Camille Styles Events.

As a young entrepreneur, I had to learn a lot about starting and running a small business, marketing (with zero budget), and working with an incredibly wide range of personality types. I was raised with a strong belief in great customer service, and working from a mentality that the client's always right has served me well. But the biggest lesson I learned came from observing hosts and hostesses, who were often so stressed out and anxious about their upcoming events that by the time their party rolled around, they just wanted to hurry up and get it over with!

I knew in my gut that there had to be a better way. I mean, the whole point of parties is that they're supposed to be *fun*, right? Yet so often fun didn't even factor into these parties—they were more about impressing their guests and stressing over whether everything went off perfectly (including things completely out of anyone's control, like the weather!). As I worked to build my clientele, I also decided to launch a blog, CamilleStyles.com, as a personal

outlet for creativity as well as a portfolio of sorts to attract clients. This core vision of making parties fun and stress-free became my battle cry to harried hosts everywhere, and I made it a personal goal to help my clients, as well as my blog readers, rediscover the beauty, meaning, and sheer deliciousness that make hosting gatherings worth our time and effort.

When Adam and I married, I relished in making our home into a haven, and like so many newlyweds, we began to entertain much more frequently. Even when it was just the two of us, we set the table, lit candles, and cooked something delicious—and suddenly a night at home was elevated to a moment worthy of savoring and remembering. It made me realize that I wanted my website to be a place where readers could not only find ideas for life's big celebrations but also get inspired to infuse beauty into their daily lives through the food they made, the rooms they designed, the outfits they wore, and the way they pampered themselves.

Flash-forward four years, and I'll be honest: sometimes I have to pinch myself when I wake up in the morning and spend my "workday" immersed in all the things that I love. Sure, just like any other job it has its unglamorous moments (accounting, anyone?), but to browse my favorite blogs, interview fascinating and stylish people, flip through books on art and design in the name of research, and most of all, challenge myself to continue being creative every single day? I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Within these pages is a combination of practical wisdom from my years spent planning events professionally, jaw-dropping images that are born from my lifelong pursuit of beauty, and loads of advice and inspiration from some of the most creative and interesting people I know, all of them total experts in their fields. There are also lots of tidbits on how I organize my home, look my best when I'm short on time, feed my family deliciously, and really just live my life in the very best way I can. I hope this book encourages each of you to wake up every morning with a desire to engage the senses—to open your eyes fully to the beauty that surrounds you. Instead of "saving" your loveliest things for some day in the future, I want you to set your tables with your best dishes (go ahead and use the linen napkins, too), wear the dress that makes you feel great (even if your destination is the grocery store), and buy the freshest, most bursting-with-flavor seasonal ingredients at the market to inspire tonight's dinner. A great bottle of wine wouldn't hurt, either.

I love the term that psychologists use for those times when you're living in the moment, utterly immersed in your present activity. It's called *flow*, and while the experience is different for everyone depending on their unique abilities and passions, the common denominator is an experience of joy and serenity. So remember: everything here is simply a launching pad for your own creativity. As you walk through your day, watch for that inspiring cue—maybe it's a vivid color or a surprising flavor combination—that captures your imagination and invites you to create something uniquely your own. Then dive right into life and express *your* creativity at its best—after all, nothing's more beautiful than your truest self, shining its brightest!


fall





CHAPTER

# 2

>>>>>>>>>> EMBRACING THE SEASON <<<<<<<<<<

# SIGHTS, SOUNDS AND TASTES OF FALL

This morning, as Adam, Phoebe, and I headed out for our daily walk to the coffee shop, we watched the neighborhood kids boarding the bus for their first day of school. Though it's been years since I've donned a backpack, I was immediately filled with that sense of giddy excitement that only a new school year can bring. While every season has its own story of new beginnings, for me, fall has always symbolized the ultimate in fresh starts, bursting with the promise of shiny red apples and infinite potential for the coming months. This is the season of trees erupting in colorful splendor and scents of cinnamon and cider wafting from the kitchen, the time when I take stock of my wardrobe and invest in that beautiful cashmere sweater or leather handbag that I'll keep for years, when evenings return indoors and dinners on the terrace become cozy suppers by the fire.

My favorite fall celebrations include autumnal flavors and a few rustic touches, and this season is devoted in part to those treasured rituals that usher in the cooler months. And what better place to start than Thanksgiving, the ultimate in autumn tradition?

Though you've got to love a holiday dedicated to family and a table groaning with platters of delicious food, there's no

Camille

question that Thanksgiving can bring its own set of hostess anxieties (cooking the turkey! perfecting the piecrust!). Though I now consider it one of my favorite days of the year, the very first Thanksgiving I ever hosted was *far* from stress-free.

Adam and I had just gotten married, and we (misguidedly) decided it would be a good idea to invite both sides of our families to celebrate Thanksgiving in our nine-hundred-square-foot bungalow. The night before the feast, as we carefully removed the giblets from the inside of our turkey, we noticed it still seemed a little frozen in the middle, but in our total inexperience, we assumed all would be fine and it would be thawed by the next day. Adam was planning to fry a turkey (for the first time, I might add), and we'd stocked up on a brand-new turkey fryer and vats of cooking oil just for the occasion.

In the morning, our families arrived and we all got to prepping in our tiny kitchen. I tasked my younger sister, Molly, with the jobs of peeling potatoes and cleaning lettuce, and—though I'm not laying blame—*something* off-limits must have dropped into the garbage disposal, because before we knew it the sink was clogged . . . and since everything was connected to the same drainage system, the only toilet in the house was, too. For the next couple of hours, our guests shuttled to the neighborhood coffee shop for bathroom breaks as Adam and my dad tried to fix the issue while waiting for the emergency plumber to arrive.

Finally, it was time to get the turkey in the deep fryer. All the men went outside to watch the action, and Adam set his watch for the optimal cooking time. Of course, our dads, in all their years of turkey-cooking wisdom, convinced him to leave it in *a little longer* than planned *just in case* . . . and several minutes later they pulled out a burned-to-a-crisp turkey. As we sat down to carve the blackened beast, my father-in-law reached in, and much to our dismay, pulled out a small plastic bag. Apparently, due to the partially frozen state of the turkey's interior the night before, I'd mistakenly left it in the cavity, where it had fried right along with the rest of the bird. Suffice it to say that, at that particular Thanksgiving feast, the side dishes were the stars of the show.

We've hosted Thanksgiving at our house every year since, and each one gets a little more seamless and, yes, delicious. Every time we gather around the table, someone inevitably brings up that first Thanksgiving that we shared together, and we all laugh about the completely unforgettable day. And I'd bet that we're all secretly giving thanks for a bigger house with multiple bathrooms and a perfectly golden, juicy, *roasted* turkey.



## HERE'S HOW I CONNECT WITH ALL THE SENSES TO USHER IN THE FALL SEASON:

**TEXTURE.**

Cozy cashmere, nubby wool, and worn-in flannel are so welcome to the touch when the air turns cool. At home, this is the time when all my energy goes into making our living spaces as inviting and comfortable as possible. I lay down rugs to warm bare feet, toss a few plush throw pillows in varying textures on the couch, and place an oversize cable-knit throw over an armchair that just *begs* for someone to curl up and take a nap.

**SCENT.**

In the fall, I renew my nightly bath-time ritual that's a much-anticipated transition from the busyness of the workday to a serene, bedtime frame of mind. If you're not usually into baths, I'd encourage you to give it a shot! The mere act of sinking into a hot sudsy tub relaxes the muscles and clears the mind of daily stressors to make room for calm and serenity. To make it the ultimate sensory experience, I burn a lavender candle and place a few drops of rose essential oil into the water. Postbath, I wrap up in an extra plush towel and moisturize from head to toe with a rich body butter that smells like honeysuckle. It's an at-home ritual that will give your local spa a run for its money.

**COLOR.**

Turning leaves, plaid scarves, and market stalls piled high with squash and countless varieties of apples: these iconic symbols of fall get me in the mood for a rich palette in shades of amethyst and pumpkin. On the table, I bring out my stoneware plates in earthy shades of taupe, lay down flax-hued napkins, and light candles that cast a golden glow when darkness begins to descend earlier each evening. In my wardrobe, I gravitate toward an organic-feeling palette of cream, taupe, and black, with a few jewel-toned pieces in the mix to add vibrancy. And now is most definitely the season to experiment with more drama in the makeup department. A ruby lip, emerald eye shadow, or kohl-lined lash (though please, not all at once) brings a welcome sense of polish after the barefaced days of summer.

**TASTE.**

How do I love fall cooking? Let me count the apple-pie-scented ways . . . Long before the first hints of cooler weather arrive, I'm already fantasizing about platters of roasted butternut squash with sage, hearty grain salads studded with dried fruit, and juicy turkey with glistening skin. I'm finally ready to leave behind the fresh berries and light sorbets of summer in favor of apple crisp baked in cast-iron skillets and my mom's famous pecan pie. In fact, it's these food rituals that really epitomize autumn celebrations for me. Usher in the season by making a few tried-and-true recipes that smell and taste like total comfort. And why not use it as an excuse to reconnect with people who are back in town after summertime travels? Invite a group to join you for an early fall dinner; there's no better way to say "welcome home."


jordan

CHAPTER

# 3

# SETTING THE FALL TABLE

As alfresco dinners become a relic of summertime and every passing day gets a bit shorter than the one before, my thoughts turn to cozying up the dining room and making the table an inviting spot where everyone slows down and lingers awhile. It's the place where our family gathers during the week to talk and catch up about the events of the day . . . and where our friends gather on weekends for long pancake brunches or dinners with red wine and bowls full of pasta. And of course, the table is the *real* star of the show on Thanksgiving, when it's transformed into a cornucopia of delicious food and everyone gathers around for the biggest feast of the year. For fall's table setting, I was inspired by the jewel-toned richness of wine country: trailing vines dripping with grapes and the unexpected interplay of rustic textures and ornate detailing.

Camille









**PALETTE.**

Amethyst, ivy, cream, charcoal.

**LINENS.**

It was love at first sight when I laid eyes on this pale gray linen tablecloth inscribed with trailing vines, flowers, and birds. It has a vintage family-heirloom quality that feels just right for fall, and its neutral palette is the perfect backdrop for linen napkins in a rich shade of amethyst.

**CENTERPIECE.**

My friend and floral designer, Elizabeth Lewis, creative director of the Nouveau Romantics, filled a low wooden bowl with flowers in every shade of purple, ranging from burgundy to pink; it echoed the other tabletop details without being overly matchy. Oak-leaf hydrangeas make a beautiful focal flower with their unique conical shape, and clematis, jasmine vines, scabiosa, astrantia, and ranunculus completed the design. When creating a low, wide arrangement, we always start by balling up chicken wire and attaching it to the inside of the vase using floral tape for a structure that will stabilize the flowers as you start adding them. To create this horizontal shape, think about going "long" with the arrangement—letting vines trail horizontally and onto the tabletop itself.

**PLACE SETTINGS.**

On a trip to San Francisco a few years ago, I discovered Heath Ceramics, a Bay Area–based pottery company, and became obsessed with the beauty and simplicity of their dinnerware. I added these white coupe plates to my collection and have since incorporated them into just about every style of table design you can imagine. Proof that it always pays to invest in a versatile set of white dishes! Here I've paired the plates with vintage silverware and delicate etched glassware that was passed down from my great-grandmother.

**THE DETAILS.**

I tied a rich velvet ribbon around each set of vintage flatware for a five-second touch that feels more modern than napkin rings and makes for an effortless way to attach a calligraphied place card to each setting. The napkins are made from a beautiful bolt of amethyst linen fabric that I cut to size and left unhemmed, and an oversize wood-topped decanter placed on the table is a wine-country-esque showpiece that's as beautiful as it is functional.

*SOURCES*

*Floral design: The Nouveau Romantics*
*Calligraphy: Antiquaria*
*Props: Loot Vintage Rentals*
*Tabletop pieces: Anthropologie*


NOTEBOOK

CHAPTER

# 4

# FINDING AND HOLDING ON TO INSPIRATION

From the time I was five years old, my mother discovered she could keep me endlessly entertained with a stack of old magazines, a blank notebook, and a glue stick. I'd spend hours working on my collages, an early form of what later became my inspiration files—one of the most important tools in my creative process. There was something so energizing about flipping through the magazines and ripping out whatever caught my eye, for no other reason than I found it beautiful. Maybe it was a certain shade of blue or the way a model carried herself or the pattern of a tablecloth . . . but something in the image told me that I needed to hold on to it and store it away for the future.

Years later, I'm every bit as obsessed with finding and keeping images that thrill me, and many of my favorites have helped shape all different aspects of my life, from fashion to food to interior design. Today folders on my computer are dedicated to ideas for future projects and parties, and a huge cork board hangs in the center of my office, providing a constant source of creative stimulation (and eye candy).

The process of continually developing my personal style always starts with discovering inspiration that excites me and stirs something up in my soul. Of course, this can come from countless sources besides magazines and websites; some of my favorite ideas were sparked by something as unexpected as the shape of a perfume bottle on my makeup table or the handmade stoneware used at a great restaurant in LA. Looking for your own visual inspiration is a lifelong journey, so cast a wide net and don't forget that it can be found wherever you go (which makes every minute of life an adventure, don't you think?).

Camille

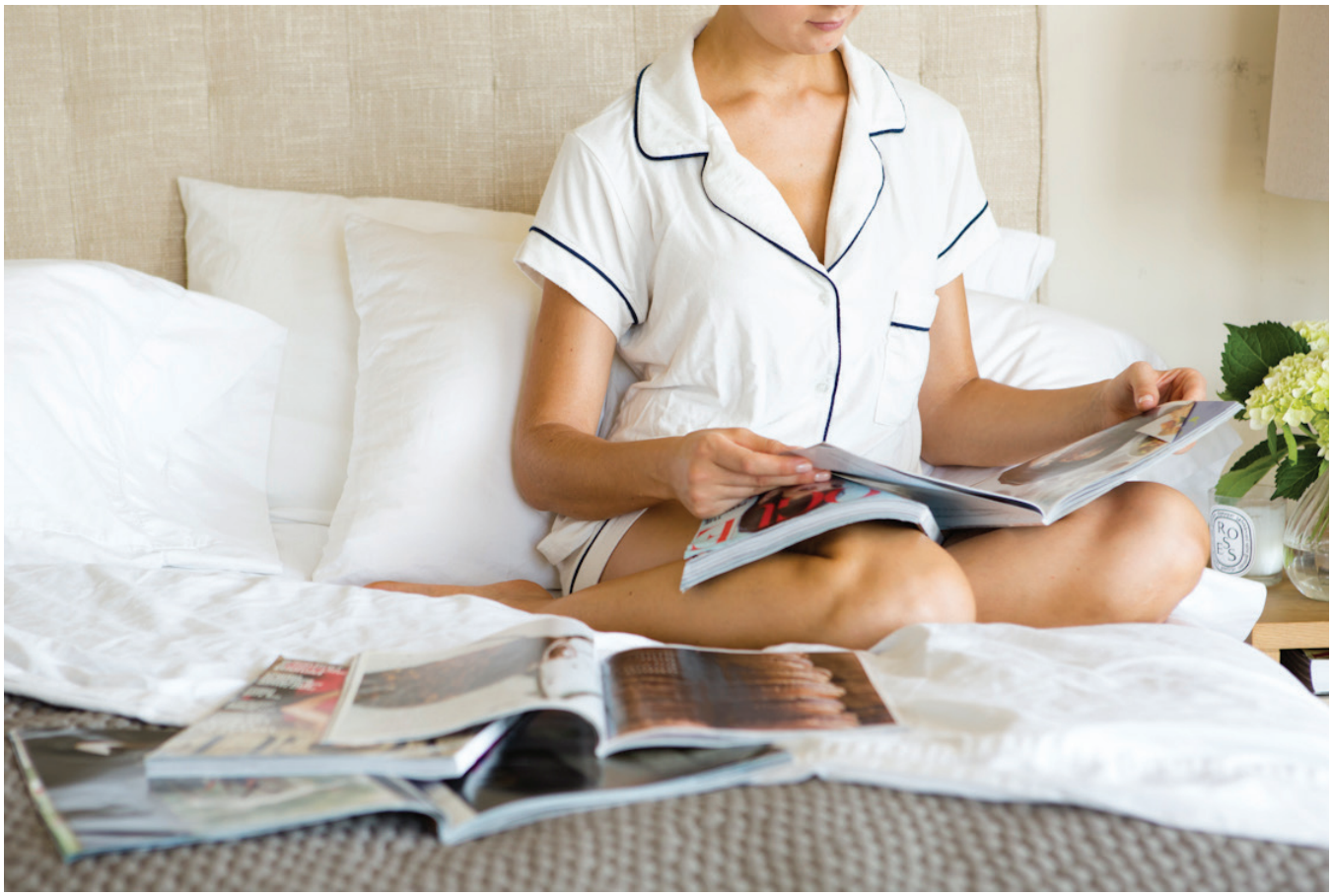
So how do I approach the process of finding, organizing, and translating inspiration into a highly personal style that reflects who I am? For starters, I take photos wherever I go. When I spot a woman wearing an outfit I love, read an innovative restaurant menu, or notice an eye-catching typeface in an ad, I pull out my phone and snap away (best to ask permission if you're photographing a person, though!). I'll often e-mail the photo to myself with a note in the subject line about why I loved it—and then, once back at home, I'll save it on my computer to be accessed later. Magazines are obviously a rich source for beautiful ideas, but don't disregard catalogs from fashion or home brands that you love: I often flip through West Elm and Anthropologie catalogs to see how their teams set the table or style a bedroom nightstand. When my heart beats a little faster on a certain page, I carefully cut it out and scan a high-res image so I always have a digital copy saved. Of course, you can go low-tech if that's more your thing! Pinning images onto a cork board, gluing into a notebook, or storing them in file folders near your desk can be every bit as effective. The key is to keep them in a spot where you can find them when you need them.

I also subscribe to blogs across lots of different categories and start most days by scrolling through new posts. It's amazing how reading about food can spark an idea for a dinner party theme, which then dictates the flowers I'm going to buy for the table—but that's just how inspiration works! The creative process is meandering and unpredictable, and when I allow myself to follow an idea down a path but I'm not sure where it might lead, delightful bursts of inspiration strike when I least suspect them.

It's no surprise that travel provides some of the richest opportunities for inspiration. When Adam and I started the process of building our house three years ago, we brought a scrapbook to that first meeting with our architect that contained snapshots from our honeymoon on the Amalfi Coast. We'd come away so inspired by the white stucco buildings, stone planters overflowing with colorful bougainvillea, and most of all, the deep blue of the Mediterranean Sea that we longed to re-create a taste of that same beauty in the design of our future home. Years later, it makes me smile to wake up each morning and push back the sheer white curtains that remind me so much of the ones in our beachside hotel room.

It's worth noting that inspiration files can and *should* include images that are pure fantasy. So what if your finances don't allow for exact reproduction of that Italian villa you fell in love with online? Maybe you could create a similar look in your garden by planting mounds of rosemary bushes or a couple of citrus trees. The inspiration you gather from all these varied sources might be literal (spotting the perfect paint color for your dining room) or more abstract (reading *The Great Gatsby,* then throwing a dinner party with a Jazz Age vibe; seeing a painting that inspires you to redo your bedroom with an Impressionist feel). Don't overthink the process: if you love an image, save it, and you may realize only later how it helped to shape your aesthetic.

Every once in a while, I take stock of my inspiration files and sort through the images, searching for the common thread in color scheme, texture—even an overall feeling of energy or serenity. This is the time for ruthless editing: if I can't remember why I saved a photo or feel like it no longer "fits," I toss it.



Your style and tastes *will* inevitably change, and I find it best to keep only the things that inspire you now. This is also when I consider which descriptive words best convey the feeling behind my collection (natural? glamorous? simple? colorful?), because honing in on such a description (mine—at least for now—is "classic and understated with a dash of bohemian") allows me to filter through all the options out there and focus on what's really "me." It also keeps me from trying to cram too many disconnected ideas into one party, room, or outfit. Whether I'm considering a new pair of shoes or making some updates to my living room, I can always refer back to my files and think about my personal style description, helping me stay true to who I am and what I really love.

Although it can be helpful to divide up your files and tear sheets by project, searching for inspiration doesn't need to wait for a home remodel or big event. It's really about a way of experiencing the world with your eyes wide open, always expecting to discover something beautiful. And what to do if you're not sure *what* inspires you? Practice looking for fresh ideas wherever you find yourself: notice the subtle genius in great books or movies, allow yourself to be moved by a favorite piece of art, savor a new taste and store it away for future experimentation in the kitchen. Get ready for a whole new adventure—one in which your heart beats a little faster and the senses are awakened in an entirely new way.



CHAPTER

# 5

# LIVING WITH FLOWERS

Flowers cast an intoxicating spell, turning a simple room into one brimming with romance, a pretty table into something extraordinary. Growing up, I'd help my mom plant cutting gardens full of zinnias, bachelor buttons, daisies, and sunflowers, and in summer we'd head into our magical garden armed with clippers, returning with armfuls of stems to fill the earthenware pitchers my mom placed around the house. I always said that when I grew up, I'd continue this tradition of having fresh flowers at home . . . and I do. It's an undeniable luxury but certainly not an unattainable extravagance, and over the years I've discovered a few tips that allow me to surround myself with gorgeous blooms all year long. They don't require the skills of a florist, lots of time, or wads of cash, and if you learn some basics of how to care for cut flowers, arrangements can last for a week or even longer.

Flowers are one of the most visible ways to witness the changing of the seasons and connect to the natural world in our living spaces. In this section, we'll look at how to bring autumnal flowers and foliage into our homes as we transition into cozier months. Then, on page 181, we'll breathe new life into those rooms as we freshen them up and surround ourselves with the flowering branches and feminine petals of spring. Floral designer Elizabeth Lewis will share a few industry secrets to creating beautiful arrangements for everyday life, and she created these looks for both fall and spring that feature each season's most show-stopping blooms. If you usually limit yourself to cut flowers for parties or Valentine's Day, I hope you're inspired to experience the joy of surrounding yourself with flowers—if for no other reason than taking pleasure in their innate beauty. Living with flowers helps us be fully present and embrace life's beautiful moments. We needn't wait for special occasions—*today* is worthy enough.

Camille



## HOW TO BUY

Just as we take a cue from the season's ripest produce to plan our meals, why not let what's currently growing guide our flower choices? Although my flower market can order just about anything for me year-round, the advantages of buying locally include freshness (they've probably traveled a shorter distance) and a more nature-centered approach to bringing flowers into the home.

When choosing among stems, go for the blooms that aren't completely open, so they'll have a longer life once arranged. Most flowers will continue to open once cut, and part of the fun is watching your bouquets change and evolve as the buds transition to full blooms. Choose firm leaves and stems that aren't discolored.

Pick up a bunch or two of foliage to incorporate texture and color variation. Using the flower's own leaves or herbs from your garden can be really beautiful and add interest to the bouquet, and foliage is one of the most cost-effective ways to add fullness to an arrangement.

When you get home from the market, unwrap your flowers immediately and get them into water as soon as possible.

## HOW TO ARRANGE

Cut stems on a diagonal using sharp scissors or a knife. The goal is to expose as much surface area on the stem as possible so that the flower can absorb the maximum amount of water.

Fill the vase with clean, lukewarm water. Use floral food (yes, it really works!) to give the flowers energy and prevent the growth of bacteria. If the vase is clear, look for a clear vase solution, or at least be sure to change the water daily. Now you're ready to start adding flowers.



Working with one stem at a time, remove all foliage that will fall below the waterline in the vase to prevent the growth of bacteria.

Build a base using foliage and/or branchy stems. Think about whether you'd like your grouping to be symmetrical or asymmetrical—this base will set the stage for the final shape.

Add focal flowers (the arrangement's pièces de résistance), using the stronger branchy stems as a foundational structure. Place these in the most visible spots so they'll be the arrangement's defining elements.

Save the most delicate flowers for the end, weaving them into the other stems to provide support. Let them be a bit more "wild"—trailing, gesticulating, and adding movement to the arrangement. I often try to create an organic look in my arrangements by thinking about how the flowers appeared when they were growing in nature. Consider a tulip's graceful curves or a vine's trailing twists and cultivate these natural "gestures" into the arrangement's shape.

## HOW TO CARE FOR

Change the water daily, *especially* if you didn't add floral food to the water, to eliminate bacteria and sludge.

When flowers start to go limp, recut the stems on a forty-five-degree angle—they just might perk up again!

Discard wilted blooms immediately.

Keep your arrangement away from drafts or direct sunlight.

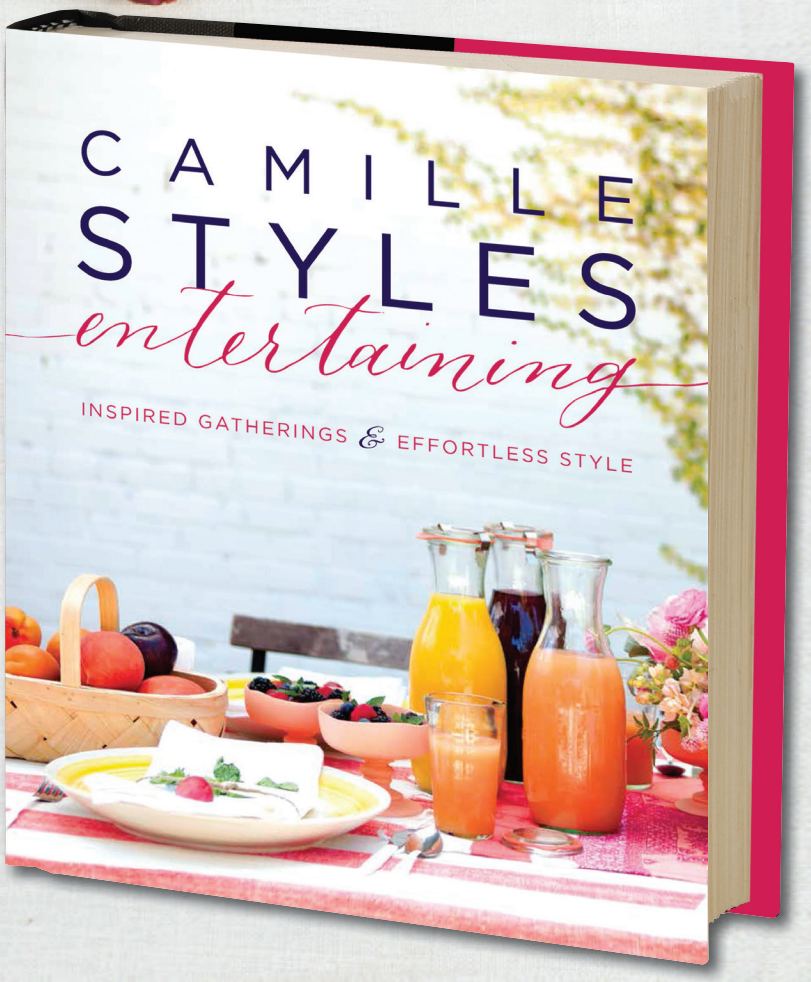


# CAMILLE STYLES *entertaining*

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CAMILLE STYLES is the founder and creative director of the popular lifestyle blog *Camille Styles,* as well as a sought-after event stylist and lifestyle expert. On her blog, she shares the creative entertaining ideas that inspire her parties and her life with hundreds of thousands of readers every month. She lives in Austin, Texas, with her husband and daughter.

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