

STORY PAULA M. BODAH PHOTOS LUCY CALL

FESTIVE BY NATURE

*The bounty of the forest provides the inspiration
for holiday decorating in a Montana home*

The dining room's traditional architectural details, antique furniture and hand-drawn mural wallpaper made a perfect canvas for designer Jeremiah Young's holiday artistry, which emphasizes natural materials like pine cones, evergreens and yards and yards of magnolia garland.

Jeremiah Young didn't have Christmas in mind when he designed this Montana home.

He was more attuned to his clients' classic sensibility when he outfitted the dining room with dark reclaimed-wood ceilings, white trim and a hand-drawn wallpaper mural with a pastoral theme. "You could drop this house in the Irish countryside and it would be right at home," he says about the stately manor-style home.

When he returned to decorate for the holidays, however, Young, principal at the Billings, Montana, design firm Kibler & Kirch, saw that he had created the perfect backdrop for a festive display. The tonal wallpaper and the deep reds of the rug and the mohair-upholstered chairs suddenly seemed tailor-made for the season.

Such quiet elegance, the designer thought, called for the timeless, authentic look of natural materials. He brought in greens and more greens and used them with abandon. He draped magnolia garlands on the antique sideboard and the china closet, fashioned wreaths of magnolia accented with plump pine cones, and even tucked magnolia sprigs into the chandelier. "We went all the way with the greens," Young says.

If the tree looks especially fulsome, that's due to one of Young's favorite tricks. "I like to stuff the tree with a whole lot of other greens like magnolia and sprigs of blue spruce and other pines," he says. The supplemental branches give >>



the tree a denser, healthier look, he notes, and it means you can go lighter with the ornaments. In this home, he divulges, the branches are all artificial. "If you invest in high-quality greens, you can use them forever," he advises.

A few well-placed ornaments in clear and red glass, a simple garland of linen ribbon and warm yellow lights are the tree's final touches. "I'm a maniac about warm light," Young says. "You're going to sit there in the evening, so you want a soft glow, not cold white lights."

Young next turned his attention to the table, laying woodland-themed dishes from the Italian company Abiammo Tutto atop a classic white linen, scallop-edged tablecloth from Matouk. "The tablecloth is very traditional, very elegant, but approachable," he says.

Bows of plaid and velvet ribbon adorn the chairs, and an array of pillar candles marches down the center of the table.

"Is there anything more beautiful than a whole bunch of candles?" the designer asks. Of course, he adds, they should be set at different heights, but never so high as to obscure the faces of fellow diners.

The magical result is timeless, traditional, but hardly clichéd. "It's absolutely unrestrained, but it's also very elegant," Young says. "I'm not sure I've ever done anything more beautiful." ○

ABOVE: Young's version of the classic red-and-green holiday theme takes a subdued, elegant turn. Crystal and brass accents add sparkle. RIGHT: Spode's timeless holiday-themed china fills the magnolia-draped antique corner cupboard. Young affixed a wreath to the mirror behind the dining table's head chair. "When you put something on a mirror, you get twice the impact," he says.

kiblerandkirch.com



"IS THERE ANYTHING MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN A WHOLE BUNCH OF CANDLES?"

INTERIOR DESIGNER JEREMIAH YOUNG