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MAKE MERRY, NOT SCARY

A SOPHISTICATED APPROACH TO HOLIDAY DECOR

BY LAUREN BECKHAM FALCONE

Interior designer Christina Sullivan lives and breathes laid-back luxury. The vice president of the New York-based design firm Tocar, the Worcester native knows how to strike a balance between modern and traditional.

But how do you keep your home-decorating balance when the holidays roll around? Sullivan, who co-founded Tocar 10 years ago with her business partner Susan Bednar Long, believes it's easy to get festive without "looking like The Christmas Tree shop."

Use color as your starting point. "Choose a base color such as red, but do



Interior designer Christina Sullivan, a Worcester native, worked for the design teams at Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger before starting her own New York-based firm, Tocar, 10 years ago.

not shy away from blues or aubergine, as they are incredibly festive as well," said the 38-year-old designer, who studied design at Framingham State College and Paris Fashion Institute. "Whatever your color is, go with your gut and choose accents colors to match."

Sullivan, whose expertise ranges from office space to residences to yachts, favors "outside the gift-box" decorative ideas — arrange pheasant feathers on a fireplace mantel, or trim a chandelier with large sprigs of holly or berries.

"Another sophisticated, inviting look, is glass colored balls and pinecones



Interior designer Christina Sullivan's approach is laid-back luxury, whether she's redesigning a home office or dining room, this page, or styling a holiday decoration, far left.



surrounding a large pillar candle on a plate," said Sullivan, who worked for the interior design teams at Ralph Lauren and Tommy Hilfiger before starting her own business. "It's so simple, yet so beautiful. And adding tiny gold balls would reflect the candlelight and create a warm, homey glow."

But be careful. Creativity can quickly turn into clutter.

"You know that phrase 'too many cooks in the kitchen spoil the meal'? Well, the same reasoning applies to de-

sign," she said. "Too many holiday decorations spoil the decor. Have you ever seen a decorated tree and forgot there was pine under the dressings?"

In the end, Sullivan said, let the real meaning of the season guide your decorating.

"My mother's favorite decor — and mine as well — is to create a menagerie of holiday cards and tape them neatly along the doorway molding of your home," she said. "This is what the holidays are all about — friends and family." ■