



Green Lines

THE LITTLE GARDEN CLUB OF MEMPHIS
Member of The Garden Club of America



President's Letter

Remember when we were young and it seemed like Christmas only came about every 10 years? The wait from one December 25 to the next December 25 was excruciating. Now, Christmas comes around so fast each year that I can hardly keep up. I remember being younger and my mother commenting on that very thing and my wishing that I saw it like she did and not as an interminable journey around the sun. I certainly understand now – more as I get older – and I can sense my mother winking and smiling at my on-going understanding of how life works.

Our December membership meeting will feature Susan Gravely, founder and CEO of Vietri Italian ceramics. You may not even realize how often you come across her creations in daily life. Her story is fascinating and she is as fun and lovely as they come. See below from Paige and Jean for more information on Susan and her story.

I hope it goes without saying that I wish for you all a joyous holiday season full of laughter and love, and I'll see you in the new year (another thing that comes around too fast!), but hopefully before.

Love,
Emily



December Meeting - Susan Gravely

Susan Gravely is the Founder and CEO of vietri, a lifestyle brand offering handcrafted Italian tabletop and home and garden accessories. Susan grew up in eastern North Carolina, and due to her father's international business, her family hosted his visiting colleagues from around the world for wonderful dinner parties. From her earliest days, Susan helped set the table for those dinners, appreciating the varied wonders of the world and gathering together.

In 1983, Susan took a trip to Italy with her



mother and sister. The three women fell in love with the colorful hand-painted dinnerware they discovered on the Amalfi Coast, and they decided to build a wholesale company to share it with their friends and family back home. Since then, Vietri has grown to become America's largest importer of Italian ceramics. Vietri products can be found in more than 2,000 specialty retailers and department stores in all 50 states and internationally. Often described as a "modern fairy tale," Vietri is regularly featured in *House Beautiful*, *Oprah*, *Veranda*, *Southern Living*, *Garden & Gun*, *Elle Décor*, *Martha Stewart Weddings*, *Brides*, and *Coastal Living*. Susan currently oversees product design for Vietri and lives in Chapel Hill, North Carolina with her husband, Bill, and dog, Franco.

We will have copies of Susan's wonderful cookbook, *Italy on a Plate*, for sale as well as her children's book, *The Magic of Old St. Nick*. Just in time for your holiday shopping!!

--Paige Proctor



Welcome New Members!



Floral Design

If you are anything like the Home Depot, you've been decorated for Christmas since mid-October. As for the rest of us, never fear, there is still time! Sometimes all you need is just a wreath to get into the Christmas spirit. Here are a few of my favorite hacks from simplest to most "ambitious."

The double take:

Don't knock a grocery store wreath until you've tried it. Start by removing the sad, flat, undersized bow and any other "accoutrements." Then, take a second wreath and wire the two back to back with floral wire. This gives the new wreath substance and depth, and makes it look just as good from the inside if on a glass door or window.



The fluff:

Pine wreaths are so beautiful, but naturally dark due to all that chlorophyll that keeps them evergreen. By tucking in sprigs of additional, lighter greenery, you can add contrast, texture, and dimension. You don't even need to wire it in...just jab it! This can be done with boxwood, cedar, or arborvitae from your yard. You can also do this with store-bought greenery like eucalyptus, hypericum, laurel or even juniper berries. It's really fun to spray paint the greenery for even more "pop." And extended shelf life. The best part is it's easy to replace if your "additions" die an early death. (See photo above.)



The “oasis”:

As we all know, Memphis weather can be fickle. One recent year it was so hot that I decided to make my wreath in oasis foam.

(Insert Amazon plug.) The only thing I “bought” was the wreath frame and some thistle. Everything else came from my yard, trimmings from the bottom of the tree, and garland remnants. I was really able to extend its lifespan by watering it as needed. Of course, the options here of greenery/floral combos are legitimately endless. (See photo above.)



The masochist:

If you really want to go for it, you can DIY with a metal wreath frame. There are endless tutorials on YouTube for this. Custom wreaths are really helpful if you have an abnormally sized door or French doors and need something smaller than you can find. You can forage for greens or hit up your favorite florist for bundles of mixed greenery. This can also be done with small leaf magnolia and zip ties. (See photo above.)

I hope these tips are helpful, but when in doubt, pull that artificial wreath out of the attic and strap on a bow.

Merry Christmas!

--Mimsie Crump

December Birthdays

4 Katie Wiener
6 Courtenay McAllister
15 Katie Eleazer
15 Kirk McClintock
17 Musette Morgan
20 Alison Barton
22 Sarah Cowens



Lobster Bisque for Christmas Eve by Alex Hitz



"I always call this 'Lobster Bisque for Christmas Eve' because that's how I remember it at our house in Atlanta. It's pretty and pink, decadent, rich, and let's face it, expensive enough to be considered special occasion food." - Alex Hitz

TO PREPARE THE LOBSTER

- 4 tablespoons salted butter
- 2 pounds lobster meat (claw, tail, body, or fin)
- ½ teaspoon of salt
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper (to season the lobster meat only)
- 4 tablespoons cognac

1. In a large skillet over medium heat, melt the butter.
2. When the foaming has subsided, add the lobster, salt, and pepper.

3. Sauté the lobster meat for about 1 minute, until the meat is fully coated with butter.
4. Add 4 tablespoons of the cognac and continue to cook approximately one minute more, until the cognac is fully incorporated.
5. Remove the lobster from the heat and drain it in a colander over a bowl.
6. Reserve both the lobster and the liquid. And do this quickly. Nobody wants to eat overcooked lobster.

TO PREPARE THE SOUP

- 4 tablespoons salted butter
 - 1 cup diced onion
 - ¼ cup flour
 - 3 ½ cups very rich chicken stock
 - 3 ½ cups milk
 - 1 ¼ teaspoons salt
 - ½ teaspoon white pepper
 - 1 cup heavy cream
 - 3 tablespoons lemon juice
 - 2 garlic cloves, minced
 - 7 tablespoons double-strength tomato paste
 - 1 tablespoon dried tarragon
 - ½ teaspoon ground nutmeg
1. In a medium-sized skillet over a medium heat, melt the butter.
 2. When the foaming has subsided, add the onions and stir, cooking them until they become translucent, approximately 8 to 10 minutes.
 3. Add the flour and stir the mixture until the flour has cooked through, approximately 1 to 2 minutes. The mixture will be fairly stiff. Turn off the heat.
 4. In a large, heavy pot, over a medium heat, heat the stock and the milk until it is almost scalding.
 5. Add the salt and pepper to the butter and onion mixture.
 6. Whisk it vigorously to break up any lumps.
 7. Bring the mixture to a boil and then turn off the heat.
 8. The soup base will have thickened to the appropriate consistency after boiling.
 9. Add the cognac, lemon juice, garlic, tomato paste, tarragon, and nutmeg.
 10. Add the reserved pan juices from the cooked lobster and whisk thoroughly.
 11. Bring the mixture to a boil and then remove it from the heat.
 12. When you are ready to serve the soup, divide the cooked lobster meat equally in the soup serving plates and pour the hot soup over the lobster.

Yield: 8 cups, or 6 to 8 servings

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Visit the Little Garden Club Website!

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