



Home for the Holidays

It's beginning to look a lot like Christmas ...
but the prettiest sight to see is the holly that will be
on your own front door ...

by Megan Swoyer Garbinski



Opening page and above: Katie Brown (www.katiebrown.com), the host of "Katie Brown Workshop," has as many home decorating tips as Santa has toys in his bag. "I'm a little obsessive when it comes to holiday decorating," she admits.

When Katie Brown rolls out the holiday welcome mat at her home it's with several feet of evergreen boughs, pinecones galore and a dozen or so wreaths. No, she doesn't have 12 doors, but her home does feature several windows, and that's where Brown prefers to hang her wreaths.

"I'm a little obsessive when it comes to holiday decorating," says Brown, who grew up in northern Michigan near Petoskey and now is the host of "Katie Brown Workshop," which airs on PBS. She also is the woman behind Katie Brown house wares, available at Meijer.

Brown's cozy and imaginative approach to the home arts has been refreshing for a new generation of homemakers. Now in her seventh season of "Katie Brown Workshop," (she formerly had shows on Lifetime, A&E and Style networks), Brown says much of her inspiration comes from northwest Michigan's Petoskey. "If you open up my veins, Lake Michigan would come out," she says with a laugh. "When it comes to hanging wreaths, I don't miss a window," she says. "And I'll put a big one on the the front door and then boughs of evergreen around the door. I'll sprinkle pinecones everywhere, especially in my window boxes."

All Through the House

Katie Brown's cooking gadgetry and holiday décor brim with practicality and beauty.



Katie Brown sets a holiday table brimming with joy. Many of these items and the products on the opposite page are from her own line, available at Meijer.

Katie Brown's house ware line, available at Meijer, features everything from throws to ornaments to measuring cups to sheets to cutting boards. If looks could sell, these are likely flying off the shelves. But taking it one step further than mere beauty, Brown aimed for practicality, too.

"My products are super solution-oriented," says Brown. "I wanted designs that were practical and I thought about things that drive me crazy, like mixing bowls, for example, that slide when you're stirring, so mine have skid pads on them. I also thought about how thick a dish towel should be and that aprons should be stain-resistant."

Brown's prowess in home decor, cooking, gardening, entertaining, managing a

household, and raising a family is much appreciated by today's busy parents and homemakers. People Magazine, in fact, has hailed her as "TV's meat-and-potatoes Martha Stewart," and USA Today called her "the doyenne of domesticity for Generation X."

You may have seen Brown on Oprah, "Good Morning America," or "Live with Regis and Kelly," or perhaps you've garnered entertaining and gardening tips in books such as "Katie Brown Entertains," "Katie Brown Decorates," "Katie Brown's Weekends," "Katie Brown's Outdoor Entertaining," and "Katie Brown Celebrates" (all from Little, Brown Press). Wherever you may have caught Brown, there's a good chance she shared stories about practicality and beauty. And that's exactly where her Meijer products came into play.

"It's stylish stuff at a good price," she explains. "I would give them a starting point for, say, a big, gorgeous wooden bowl for salads and they'd say, we can offer that for something like \$19.99. And I'm like 'no way!' That's the fun thing about working with Meijer — they're about durability and user-friendliness. Plus they're Michigan-based!"



Katie Brown's casual dishware and table accoutrement are perfect for entertaining drop-in friends, brunch guests and others. Traditional plays a major role in the Michigan native's life and the holidays are a big part of that.

Besides at her family home on the Upper Peninsula's Les Cheneaux Islands in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, one of Brown's favorite places to be is in front of just about any fireplace (there's one in every room) in her mid-1800s Colonial abode in Connecticut. There with her husband and two daughters, along with various family members and friends, Brown will celebrate the holidays among bow and ribbon heaven.

"I'm kind of following in my mother's shoes," observes Brown. She recalls one Christmas at her parents' home in Michigan where there were tons of bows in hot pink and two shades of green-blue. "The color combination just popped," she remembers. "It worked, and it's still my favorite to this day."

For Brown's own home, the creative lady of the house is contemplating a red and brown ribbons-and-bows motif this year. "Those are super-rich colors."

Amid wood floors, low beams, stone walls and blazing fires, the color scheme is sure to bring out the classic beauty of her home. "I keep my holiday decorating classic; I'm not going to lie."

Yet, she is willing to experiment with different types of trees. "We'll have a real one that's big and traditional in the living room (I have to have the smell of real pine during the holidays) and then I may have some others in different rooms that are artificial." One in particular that always turns heads is a pink, flocked tree. "It's not any taller than my 7-year-old daughter," says Brown with a laugh, "and it's got these pink lights." She's especially excited about placing a small tree on the front table in her foyer so that people will immediately get into the holiday spirit upon entering. "And I'll have a big arrangement of pine and cedar and pinecones and berries on the table, too."