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HIGH-STYLE DESIGN,  
TRAVEL + ENTERTAINING

# *At Your Service*

A COLLECTOR OF VINTAGE HOTEL SILVER  
AND A FLORAL DESIGNER COLLABORATE TO MAKE  
EVERY PARTY GLEAM AND SHINE

BY DAVID MASULLO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHICHI UBIÑA



Silver Linings (OPPOSITE PAGE) Vintage hotel silverware sets the stage for an afternoon tea. Matouk placemats and Deborah Rhodes table napkins are from Neiman Marcus. Floral arrangements are by Lemon Dahlia. **Pretty Pastels** (THIS PAGE) Tall lavender delphiniums complement similarly hued napkins, each with a vintage silver napkin ring. See Resources.

# If she wanted to, Debra

Goldstein could easily set the table in her Fairfield County home for dozens of people. And no guest would likely have the same knife, fork or spoon. Everything arrayed on Goldstein's table gleams, since all of the utensils are made of vintage silver plate, salvaged from some of the most iconic hotels in New York, London and Paris, as well as venerable steamships of their day, such as the *S.S. Normandie*.

Although Goldstein took a shine to hotel silver years ago, it wasn't until she met a woman named Ginger Kilbane, owner of a boutique in New York's Bergdorf Goodman devoted solely to the items, that she began to collect it en masse—and use the pieces daily in the home she shares with her longtime companion and their three children. "I love using and eating off the utensils and other small silver items because of the

ghosts they evoke—I think of all the thousands of people who held these items," notes Goldstein. "Every piece represents a little piece of history preserved."

So enamored is Goldstein with her ever-growing collection that she begins every Saturday morning in the home, which functions as the family's weekend property, by polishing the silverware. While electroplated silver can stand up to the dishwasher, it dulls. "It's my favorite activity, to stand in the kitchen in the early hours and quietly polish away," she says, adding that even her two dogs eat from silver-plated bowls.

While the silverware stands out on its own, Goldstein recently began an informal collaboration with Karen Legan—a floral designer with her own business, Lemon Dahlia, in nearby Wilton—to add an extra element to the table. "Debra really

likes to give her guests an experience," says Legan, "and it's great to work with such a thoughtful hostess." Whether it's for a pool party or a holiday party, Goldstein has come to rely increasingly on Legan for her ability to arrange flowers in the silver pitchers, creamers and other small items that are part of the collection.

Often using flowers grown in her own garden, and augmenting them with purchases from wholesalers in Norwalk and New York, Legan groups colorful dahlias and phlox, peonies and gomphrenas in vessels throughout Goldstein's home. "Having flowers at home makes us feel alive," explains Legan, "and the colors bring out emotions."

Goldstein, meanwhile, is in awe of her friend's abilities to transform tablescape into artworks. "I love Karen's creative vision and we really 'get' each other," Goldstein stresses. "We

have fun collaborating, and when we have weekend guests here at the house, I have Karen create little arrangements next to each bed."

Since Goldstein sources her hotel silver from everywhere from eBay to local antiques shops, she does follow one self-imposed rule. "I only collect things that have a recognizable name of a hotel on it or the initial of the hotel."

In fact, in conceiving her floral designs, Legan is careful to ensure that no bloom or stem covers each identifying mark. "When we have people to dinner, which is often," says Goldstein, "it's a fun game for everyone to turn over their utensil to see where it came from and to guess which hotel based on the initial." And if anyone gets stuck, Goldstein pulls out an up-to-date glossary to supply the answer.

**Table Of Earthly Delights**  
One of the challenges of using small silver containers for flowers is the issue of balance. Blooms that are too large or heavy can actually tip the objects. Here, a series of diminutive pitchers are filled with dahlias, phlox, ageratum, petunias and gomphrena. Floral designer Karen Legan notes, "Color on the table hits the heart of guests." See Resources.





**Home Arrangements** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM TOP LEFT) Vintage silverware often carries a hotel's name, logo or initials. Karen Legan and Debra Goldstein. This arrangement includes a David Austin Juliet garden rose, lavender scabiosa, pink asters, blueberry branches and geranium leaves; treats are from Marcia Selden Catering. Fresh flowers elevate a simple bar tray. The interior design for the dining room, and the entire house, is by Gregory Shano Interiors. See Resources.



**Party Favorites** (CLOCKWISE ACROSS SPREAD FROM OPPOSITE PAGE) Legan (in her trademark lemon yellow) and Goldstein prepare for a poolside party. Many of the fresh blooms are grown by Legan at her garden in Wilton. Setting the table with mismatched pieces is part of the charm of collecting silver. Pink dahlias are complemented by green pokeberry. Napkins and navy placemats are from East Hampton Gardens; rattan chargers are from William-Wayne & Co. See Resources.

