

Designer Beth Webb's 5 Tips for Getting Your Bar Cart Holiday-Ready

Webb shares her secrets to a party-ready cart for any type of gathering.



BY LAUREN WICKS DEC 15, 2020



Designer, author, and tastemaker [Beth Webb](#) believes hosting in your home is the greatest gift you can give of yourself, and she is eagerly awaiting the day when her house can be filled with the voices of her four children in the kitchen, the pitter-patter of grandchildren's feet, and the sounds of loved ones clinking cocktail glasses. This year, it will be just her and her husband at their [Brays Island, South Carolina](#), home, where they've traveled back and forth from their Atlanta residence to find refuge in the area's natural beauty—and have a new venue in which to cook dinner and pour a drink.

“Not one single solitary thing has been normal for us this year,” Webb says. “We have been hunkered down since March, and it's been a really weird time for everyone, but especially so for those who love to entertain. I miss it more than anything. Normally the house would be full with my children and four grandchildren, and there would be oyster roasts, quail hunts, and our 20-foot tree. That would have been our normal.”

But Webb has been busy in the kitchen—and at her bar cart—whipping up hundreds of meals and libations at home, preparing every dish and beverage since mid-March. She has found solace in the simple-yet-elegant recipes of her well-loved collection of [Ina Garten cookbooks](#) and is enjoying the pivot of turning to the recipes of her family to make the season feel special.

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“We've been looking at the traditions in our family and how we can make an out-of-the-ordinary Christmas feel extraordinary,” Webb says. “We started with thinking about the food, as always, and then decided we needed to decorate a bit differently. We figured we would be spending most of our time in the study by the fireplace, and we made it very intimate. We're all looking for new venues for dining, and I bought four of the [Montecito trays](#) from Arteriors earlier this year, which did double-duty outside by the fireplace and now will be perfect for eating our meals in the study.”



L: Arteriors's Montecito tray decked with all the entertaining goodies. R: Webb sets out fresh-cut blooms in her Bray's Island home.

ARTERIOS

Another long-standing tradition in her family is Christmas cocktail-making. Webb says growing up, she was tasked with making eggnog for her family's annual Christmas dinner for 50 people, and although she prefers drinks that are a tad bit lighter for her own gatherings these days, it taught her a lot about prepping for holiday guests.

Webb recently designed the [Brays Bar Cart](#) for [Arteriors](#), which was inspired by one in the living room of her favorite Manhattan hotel: [The Lowell Hotel](#) on the Upper East Side. She ensured this three-tiered cart would not only look as beautiful as her favorite piece hiding behind the room's bar, it would be more approachable and ultra-functional, with plenty of room to hold all the essentials—and then some.

The designer says bar carts are a necessity, whether or not you already have a full bar in your home. They make a fun statement piece on a screened porch and create a cozy nook in a library—where Webb's husband keeps a bourbon bar for post-hunting-trip happy hours. Here are her best tips for styling a beautiful yet efficient holiday bar cart of your own.

Prep the Bar Cart So You'll Get to Enjoy Your Own Party.



While this beautiful bar cart is lovely to look at when not in use, Webb is sure to stow away less important items so guest have plenty of space to pour and mix a drink.

ARTERIOS

"I'd like to say I'm a very good drinker and have lots of friends who are the mixologists—[architect] [Jeffrey Dungan](#) is king of mixing drinks," Webb laughs. "My holiday favorites are all about keeping it simple, like a French 75 or hot toddy, and when you have a lot of people over popping in and out for an open house (in normal circumstances), you need to be well-stocked. However, it's important to keep your bar cart as self-serve as it is full-serve. When guests walk in, we make the first drink, and then they are on their own."

Webb says a bar cart must have all the tools, and she loves styling them with a high-low look in mind. A great [martini shaker](#) and a tray are her most valuable bar-cart essentials, as she says it's only a matter of time before someone sloshes and misses while making a drink. You just have to style your cart thinking about how to make the necessities workable.



“When we entertain, we often will call guests before they come over and figure out their favorite drinks, so I’m not scrambling once the party starts. Before anyone arrives, I put out the Topo Chico, set the cut fruit and herbs in dishes, and set out all the goods for Bloody Marys if it’s game day.”

Save Some Space for Beautiful Things.

KAREN JAI HOME

Masafi Tray

karenjaihome.com

\$158.00

DISCOVER



A few olive branches, snacks in silver trays, silver bar essentials, and go-to liquors make this bar cart as beautiful as the rest of Webb’s home.

ARTERIORES

Webb loves adding a floral element to the bar cart when possible, which can be as simple as a bloom in a bud vase or a special arrangement that’s cohesive with the rest of the party’s florals. She advises thinking through each element and finding ways to make them look more attractive. For example, if you’re serving bourbon and Cokes, she recommends opting for the nostalgic glass bottles of Coke instead of cans to make the cart look more appealing.

“By all means, make it pretty!” Webb says. “The bar cart is my canvas, and I’m all for decorating it first and then adding the practical bits.”

Leave Space for People to Be Able to Make a Drink.



Remember to think beyond the bar cart to ensure guests have a spot to place their glass and kick up their feet.

ARTERIOS

While this tip may seem like a no-brainer, Webb says it can be easier said than done to decorate a beautiful bar cart with everything one needs to make a perfect drink *and* have a place to actually make the drink.

“I think that people often fill their bar carts too full,” Webb says. “The biggest ‘don’t’ is forgetting to leave a place to put down and mix a drink. You need at least 14 inches for a glass, a bottle of soda, and other ingredients. It may look great, but it won’t be great if you can’t use it.”

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Ditch the Paper Napkins.



A good set of linen cocktail napkins can even act as decor itself on a bar cart.

ARTERIOS

“Linen cocktail napkins are a must, even if you just buy the perforated ones on a roll,” Webb says. “They make adorable paper ones these days, and I know they have their place, but there is something special about a linen cocktail napkin. You don’t even have to spend a lot of money on them; you could collect vintage if you can’t buy a nice set. The ones on a roll are also amazing, and you can wash and iron them to use again.”



There’s something about a delicately embroidered cocktail napkin that elevates the everyday, and our style editors have shared [a few of their top picks](#). They also make fabulous hostess and graduation gifts.

Don’t Forget the Food.

CHEFANIE

Pearl Wreath Cocktail Napkins, Set of 4

chefanie.com
\$60.00

DISCOVER



Freshly baked loaves atop a soft gingham napkin are an enticing treat for guests to enjoy with their mixed drinks.

ARTERIOS

Webb says one of the biggest mistakes hosts can make is deeming the food the last priority at a cocktail party. She says it is essential to keep a few snack items on your bar cart to ensure guests aren't going to end up in trouble the next day. Her bar-cart snacks are dependent on the environment and the occasion, and she says her go-to choices at her Atlanta and Bray's Island homes are very different.

At her second home, Webb loves stocking up on a few local items from nearby Beaufort, like Firecrackers and Bitty Baby Biscuits from [The Kitchen](#), and she also loves [Callie's Cheese Crisps](#). Her crystal-laden Atlanta bar cart usually offers a more elegant assortment, like caviar, smoked salmon, pate, and pickled shrimp—and she loves serving nuts and something salty at every occasion.

“You can never go wrong with a bowl of potato chips,” Webb says. “Who doesn't love to see a good Lay's potato chip? Everyone is excited to see those instead of froufrou hors d'oeuvres.”

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