



INTERIOR MOTIVES / TEXT BY DANIELLE DAVIES

## Christmas on Vacation: Bringing the Holidays to Your Shore House

HAVING A VACATION HOME is more than just owning or renting a piece of property, at least as far as Allison Valtri is concerned.

“The purpose of the vacation home is to extend the time that you spend with your family and loved ones, and it’s supposed to be a respite from the challenges that

we all have in life. It’s supposed to be a place to really focus on spending time with one another,” says Valtri, owner of Allison Valtri Interiors in Avalon.

That time extends to the special moments in life, including the holiday season.

“The important perspective is to

take the moments in life that are valuable to you and think of ways to extend those values into the home so that you broaden your living experience,” says Valtri. “When you omit the holidays or important moments completely from a vacation home, you’re reducing the enrichment of spending time together. Even if you’re not here for Christmas Day, make plans to enjoy the weekend before or after at the shore.”

If you’re suddenly thinking you need to replicate everything you do for Christmas at your full-time home in your vacation home, think again. “This is your vacation home, so you likely don’t have a week like you would at home to execute these bright ideas,” says Valtri. “You want to plan ahead, collect materials and have them in the house, so when it comes time to putting it up, it’s a quick one-day execution.”

In other words, this isn’t your home life. This is your vacation home life. And it needs to still feel like vacation.

“You don’t want to accidentally turn your vacation home into a high-pressure zone by over-complicating a celebration,” says Valtri. “When you’re celebrating, whether it’s Christmas or a birthday party, you want to make sure that the whole experience continues to be lighthearted and a relief from the demands at home.”

Rather than spending 12 days, we’ve got 12 ways to extend the Christmas celebration to your vacation home.

### A SIMPLE GAME PLAN

Step one in holiday planning? The plan itself.

“A vacation retreat is ultimately intended to be the space your family relaxes in. Make holiday decorating a fun adventure and avoid complicated or strenuous ideas,” says Valtri, who recommends plan specifics like creating a budget, inventory list, and a short timeline for setup.

“Also, remember that this is a place to create new holiday memories and traditions. Avoid simply repeating your family home celebra-

tions. Try to create a new experience,” says Valtri.

#### COLOR SCHEME

In keeping with the simplicity idea, and in lieu of the elaborate décor you may have in your full-time home, Valtri suggests sticking to a definitive color scheme.

“I recommend limiting all holiday décor to three colors that complement your home’s palette. For example, if your walls are sky blue and your fabrics are beige and white, try using silver, white, and robin’s egg blue. This will be soothing to the eye while setting the tone for holiday cheer,” says Valtri. “A sprinkling of color can have a charming effect.”

#### CHRISTMAS TREE

The Christmas tree is at the center of so many Christmas activities that it’s hard to imagine the holiday without it.

Include a tree at your vacation home.

“Your Christmas tree at home is a collection of things that you’ve gathered from the past. “Just like the décor in your primary home, it’s going to be a much bigger kaleidoscope of experiences that you and your family have had,” Valtri says. “When putting up a tree in your vacation home, try to reduce the color and variation you typically use. Keep to the streamlined theme and aim for five types of ornaments such as a round ball, a glass object like a snowflake, a flower, a musical instrument, a torpedo-shaped ornament. White lights and a star or angel on top will be plenty of variety. The tree sets the tone for the room. Maintain the light-heartedness of your vacation home by not over designing.”

#### CANDLES

Rather than displaying knick knacks and extensive—and hard to store—

decorations, keep things simple and consider utilizing items that can be brought out throughout the year.

“Large votive holders filled with whole mixed nuts are a great holiday accents,” says Valtri. “They can often last from Thanksgiving to New Year’s and help create a cozy atmosphere.”

#### RIBBON

Another way to add charm and cheer without an overinvestment of labor or time is with ribbon.

“Large bows are cheerful accents and can be placed on mirrors or wall sconces,” says Valtri, who suggests sticking to the colors that coordinate with your décor. “Velvets and tapestry fabrics are luxurious options.”

#### AN INTERIOR WREATH

Widely recognized as a “welcome home” statement, there’s no reason wreaths must stay relegated to

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the outdoors.

“Try making one for the inside. Select a door, such as a closet that is visible upon entry,” says Valtri. “An interior wreath allows you to decorate with ribbons, florals, and decorative objects that are delicate and may not hold up to the elements.”

### GIFT WRAP INTERIOR DOORS

For the biggest bang for your buck, consider covering interior doors with wrapping paper and ribbon.

“This is an old college trick of mine,” says Valtri. “Select a solid-colored paper, perhaps silver or gold, and wrap by using painters’ tape to hold on the back side of the door, then place ribbon horizontally and vertically like a giant gift. Coordinate the ribbon with that used in the other decorations.”

Valtri recommends two ways to attach the ribbon: One, use thumbtacks at the top and the sides of the door to hold the ribbon in place; or two, staple the ends of the ribbon together to make a large band that slips onto the door.

### A MANGER

One decorative item that Valtri suggests is a manger.

“Find a buffet or even an end table, clear off your regular accents, and dedicate the space to a small-scale manger,” says Valtri. “Place a few branches of pine underneath—it can be clippings from the bottom of the tree or store bought—and place it underneath as a bed. If there is room, add small tea candles in votives. This simple layout, even on a small scale, will enhance the Christmas spirit in your vacation home.”



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### MUSIC

There is nothing worse than a technological mishap to send even the most relaxed holiday event into a stressful tailspin.

“Plan ahead and confirm which stations on your TV play holiday music or decide which speaker you will stream to from your phone,” says Valtri. “Make sure the sound will be of nice quality and is centrally located in the living area—hearing melodies of our favorite Christmas tunes is always wonderful.”

### THE TABLE SETTING

If fears of transporting—or storing—12 place settings of Christmas china have you living in fear of the holiday season, these simple tips from Valtri will have you jumping for joy.

“Transforming your everyday china to a festive holiday is simple. You need

two key elements: a decorative salad plate and linen napkins with a holiday napkin ring. The salad plate can be whimsical or elegant. It should continue to maintain the colors of your décor, but have a specific Christmas scene,” says Valtri. “This one accent will be simple to store throughout the year and will transform your table. A coordinating ring or neatly tied ribbon or raffia will complete the look.”

### THE BAR

The bar or buffet area is another easy-to-decorate, big impact area you can set up well ahead of time. Valtri has some easy-to-store suggestions.

“A strand of lights, a tablecloth, and some garland will create a festive winter wonderland,” says Valtri. “Scrunch the tablecloth to have billowing and folds, place the garland in an s curve and wrap it with lights, and place

a few tall candles and votives for added effect. Glasses, decanters, liquor, appetizers, and plates can be placed around the s curve.”

### SIGNATURE DRINK

If you’re looking for good cheer, a festive signature cocktail or mocktail will do the trick. The key? Stocking up on ingredients and glassware in advance, so there’s no last-minute scurrying during your relaxing holiday.

“Create a specialty drink that can be served with or without alcohol that is fitting to the season. For example, cranberry juice, ginger ale, and vodka make a festive punch and are beautifully served in champagne flutes—the vodka can be omitted for non-drinkers,” says Valtri. “All can have a toast to cherish loved ones and a happy Christmas season.”

Cheers! ■



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