

## feature

TWENTY SOMETHING  
by thomas henning

20.s

## Gearing Up for the Holidays, Pumpkin Style

It is that time of year again, and, pumpkins, I am ready. I have picked my theme for this year, verified my color palette, and outlined the parties I will be hosting and the main guest list that I will be working from. I have decided on my festive symbol and identified the appropriate vendors to purchase the matching

sional fantasies of a world where everyone is happy, safe, and content are not only encouraged but sold in every department store in the form of potpourri for \$19.95.

Now the crabby spinster in me realizes that it is absurd to emulate peace, love, and happiness from October through December only — that it is

want-to-hurl sort of way? If PETA wants to get up in arms about anything I think it should be that.

Anyhoo, I get that the holidays are more than glitz and glitter, mulled cinder and marzipan. It is about escape. Oh bother, pumpkins, if you are going to get politically correct on me. We all know what the holiday season is about. It's about denial and guilt and creative ways of getting that special someone to buy you that Kitchen Aid mixer you have been salivating over for the last 10 months without them even noticing because they are always too busy looking at the cute fathers toting the baby with wifey no where to be found!

Oh, sorry, pumpkins, I just tripped over a tangent. Where was I? Escape, yes, it is all about escape. Telling people how much they mean to you over brunch even though you dine with these people 45 other times a year and the only thing you think to mention is how you've lost weight as they have gained it.

I mean let's just lay the cards out on the table, shall we? Yes, I am an aesthetics whore. Yes, I'm having a silver and sage Christmas with reindeer accents and a holiday tree right out of Pottery Barn. But don't think for a minute

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tchotchkes for the gifts. I now carry the correct paint chip palettes so that I can purchase the paper and ribbons on moment's notice while working on collecting the perfect recipes to create the ideal menu. That's right, it is the holiday season.

Anyone who knows me knows that the event planner in me kicks into overdrive during the holidays. I am obsessed, from Halloween to New Year's, with creating the make-believe world of Shirley Temple movies gone by. It is that time of year when delu-

self-serving and pretentious to buy into a capitalist fantasy of aesthetically pleasing family bliss. I know that. I know that the holidays are not about the gifts and the garlands. I understand that there is more to the season than wreaths and cards of your family, which in many cases is a series of holiday cards of pets made to do ridiculous things in the interest of looking cute. I ask you, how are four Persian cats pulling a Cocker Spaniel, dressed like Saint Nick, on a sleigh anything but embarrassing and kitschy in that I-

that part of the reason I am driven to this doesn't stem from the fact that I was beaten with a vacuum cleaner for not sweeping a kitchen floor well enough when I was 13. Don't think for a minute that I don't strive to create the perfect Halloween brunch with caramel apples and harvest stew served in small pumpkins to make up for the fact that I felt inadequate all through my childhood. I hate to mar your delusions of "Cleaverville," but as much as I participate in the holidays because I love the feeling and spirit of it, I also become possessed because it is the most clear and acceptable way of forgetting the pain that is all around me.

Pumpkins, every day should be a holiday. Every day we should strive to find a way to come together as we would in a crisis situation. We are capable of so much.

Strong, loving, and supportive people are we and if we could remind each other of that every day and not only when the calendar tells us, maybe people would be less depressed during the holiday, less in debt, and less likely to feel the need to strive for acceptance.

I will still be the maniac at the counter articulating to the salesperson, in a less than civil tone, the difference between iridescent and matte organza ribbon. I will still be the one that security drags out of Filene's because I attacked the 90-year-old Quaker holding the perfect gift item that was clearly intended for me. I love the escape and I love the opportunity that the season presents. In Cliff Notes, enjoy the season but strive to keep the season alive all year long. Peace, love and may the Sales Deities bless you. ▼

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