

# How To Give The Holidays Your Personal Touch

BY LOU ANN GOOD

LEBANON — If you always find an excuse to make one more cookie or one more ornament for your Christmas tree, then Prescott Fire Hall was the place to be this week.

From Tuesday through Friday, 1,400 attended the "The Personal Touch" workshops sponsored by Lebanon County extension. The agenda featured holiday decorations, food garnishing, floral designing, cooking light, and

creating family traditions.

**Entertaining and garnishing**  
Scott L. Aungst, owner of the Connoisseur Connection, Lebanon, taught creative uses of cheese and garnishing tips to put together taste-tempting fruit and vegetable arrangements.

Aungst, who said he was self-taught, stressed that there are no limits or special formulas to follow when arranging food. He admonished that tomato peels, squash and orange skins shouldn't be discarded but fashioned into flower shapes to add a decorative touch to hors d'oeuvres.

A sharp knife is essential to create garnishes such as cutting an orange into a basket shape or fluted bowl, scooping out the orange and filling with fruit salad. Likewise, small pumpkin shells make ideal bowls in which to serve soup. Apples can be cut in a swan shape to add a touch of elegance to food trays.

Skewers and picks provide endless opportunities to attach fruits and vegetables to each other in order to make exotic displays.

**Floral Designs**

Dennis Mellot, a Lebanon floral designer, delighted the audience with floral arrangements and living sculptures of whimsical animal shapes.

The sculptures are formed from wire frames outlining animal shapes. These frames can be purchased and stuffed with spagnum moss. Add some potting soil to main body portion. Push roots of plants into body. Pack moss over it and tightly wrap with fishing line being careful not to tangle with plant. Trim moss with scissors. Pin plant runners into moss. Keep well watered. As plant grows, continue to pin stems into body until the moss is completely covered with greenery.

Mellot, who has an aversion to using the traditional red and green colors at Christmas, arranged several designs using fresh flowers in shades of yellow, red and purple.

To make a fresh centerpiece, use a large watertight saucer. Cover container and oasis with sheet moss or Spanish moss. Add accents such as stones, wood pieces, bird nests and cut flowers.

**Gift baskets**

"A tisket, a tasket, a holiday gift basket," is the gift for all according to Christenna Stamm, Lebanon. She displayed baskets in all shapes, sizes and colors. Some she handcrafted; others she purchased. Each she filled to meet the unique needs of persons such as a nursing home resident, a baby, a toddler's



The Lebanon Valley Quilters Guild along with other groups displayed their handicrafts for the workshop participants to purchase or get ideas for making their own.



Rudy and Holly Noel, reindeer creations by Sherry Kalback, have their heads formed from men's socks, their antlers from work gloves and are dressed in outgrown children's clothing.



A Victorian Christmas was the theme for Dennis Mellott's window arrangement. Floral nosegays tie back the curtains and the elegant swan spouts a colorful floral arrangement.



"Create a personalized basket for the person on your list," suggested Christenna Stamm.

bathtub needs, a food lover and a seamstress.

To give a more custom made look, she suggests lining wicker baskets with fabric.

Stamm demonstrated turning rags into colorful baskets by wrapping rag strips around craft coiling. "Often, I purchase new fabric and tear it into one-inch strips," Stamm confessed as she admitted her husband thinks it's foolish to purchase new cloth and make it ugly.

Stamm said the fabrics should be washed to prevent colors from running. The strips are wrapped around a coil and bent to form a circle and then shaped like a basket.

**Holiday cooking**

Aletta Schadler, extension interim regional director, shared tips for those who find new and compelling reasons to be concerned about holiday feasting. "Light up for the holidays by cutting desserts in half and serving on smaller plates," she suggested.

She introduced the audience to new beverages on the market. She said, "Since last year, alcohol free wines can be found on grocery shelves." But for the most calorie free drinks, she suggests, a spar-



A Christmas wreath.



The audience had time to browse and examine the displays.



A swan fashioned from an apple lends a festive touch to fruit or vegetable trays.

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