



Designer Chris H. Olsen shares tips--along with a few fond memories--that are sure to inspire you to crate your own festive New Year's Eve fete

New Year's Eve. It's the one night of the year when even the timid among us have cause to celebrate, as partygoers bask in the year that was and revel in the optimism of what the future holds. For designer and entertaining expert Chris H. Olsen, a New Year's Eve soir ee is all about blending luxury with comfort and nostalgia with trends. We asked him to transform a private room at Little Rock's Cache Restaurant into his ideal New Year's Eve party spot. Read on to learn about the piece of his childhood that inspired the party's theme and to glean ideas for your own lively bash.



Stroke of Genius Created by Natalie Madison of Natalie Madison's Artisan Cakes, the elegant clock cake—with the time set just before the stroke of midnight—is reminiscent of Olsen's boyhood. "My mom always made a clock cake every New Year's Eve, so this reminded me of my childhood. She baked it and then did vanilla frosting and covered it in coconut," Olsen says. "That was always our tradition." Here, the clock cake sets the theme for the party and was placed in the middle of the table to serve as the centerpiece.



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Grand and Central For smaller gatherings, Olsen suggests placing one long table in a central location and serving both the food and beverages from this table to make it a gathering place that is easily accessible.



Holiday Blend Since many people will still have Christmas décor close at hand or on display, Olsen recommends incorporating pieces such as ornaments into your New Year's scheme. Place neutral silver and gold ornaments in a glass hurricane for an easy and elegant way to add shine to a tablescape. Mix in blow horns or party hats for revelers to enjoy as the clock strikes midnight.



Champagne of Choice Rather than a wine tasting, Olsen chooses to delight guests with a champagne testing—perfect for toasting 2015. “Having all the champagne on the table makes it feel more like a bar, rather than a formal tasting,” Olsen says. He consulted with Colonial Wines and Spirits as he selected the various types of champagne to serve and recommends going to your local liquor store and asking them to make suggestions for what to pair with your meal before any party or gathering.

