

Rockets coach spruces up home for team Christmas party

D'Antonis aim for elegant, understated holiday decor

By Diane Cowen Updated 1:59 pm, Monday, December 12, 2016



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Evergreen garland on the fireplace mantle and sprigs dangling from wall sconces add instant holiday warmth to the Memorial home of Rockets head coach Mike D'Antoni and his wife, Laurel.

When Mike D'Antoni was hired as the Houston Rockets' head coach last summer, he and his wife set out for life in yet another city.

After years spent in Italy or various cities across the U.S., they came to Houston, purchased a home and much of the furniture it held, then hired Marie Flanigan of Marie Flanigan Interiors to help them finish it up. They also asked her to get it ready for the holidays -- and an upcoming team party -- getting all new Christmas decorations.

"I had 16 people here last week," D'Antoni said of the day that everyone visited to install holiday decorations. "I turned on Christmas music and put food out."

Flanigan and Regina Gust of Regina Gust Designs set out to create a holiday mood that matched the D'Antonis' decorating and entertaining style: elegant and understated.

"We wanted to make it special for the team party, but not overwhelm the house," Flanigan said.

The D'Antonis were among the many families affected by devastating flooding in West Virginia earlier this year. Laurel, in fact, was "rescued by nice men in a boat" -- and they lost all of the Christmas decorations they'd stored in the home's basement.

Flanigan and Gust started from scratch with a nine-foot artificial tree and garland to drape over a fireplace, along a staircase and even in the kitchen. There are other holiday touches, evergreen woven into chandeliers and from sconces and bowls of evergreen, pine cones and ornaments. The palette is natural and inviting, mixed metals, platinum and clear glass.

Soon the couple will have the team over for a Christmas party on a rare day off. "Christmas is a time to be grateful," Laurel D'Antoni said. "We'll have big food, big meat; we'll eat and we'll play."

D'Antoni loved the result of Flanigan's and Gust's efforts: "The tree is so like the North Pole, like Santa. It's magical. I love the holidays. I love Christmas."

Here are tips from Flanigan and Gust for anyone wanting to try something new for Christmas.

1. Evergreen such as a tree, wreath or garland adds instant warmth. Use it as a base and add in accents in line with your decor theme, Flanigan said.
2. If you want something other than a traditional red-green holiday theme, this year's trend is more natural and more monochromatic. Need a new color? Try platinum, Gust said.
3. Magnolia branches and leaves — real or artificial — are always a Southern holiday decor staple. They're beautiful mixed into any decorations, Gust said.
4. Get your sparkle where you can. If you want it more understated, put a little glitter on your pine cones, Gust said.
5. Copper is trending in fashion and home design, so consider adding it into your holiday decor, Gust said. Copper mixes very well with the gold ornaments you likely already have.
6. If you like ribbon, consider mixing linen ribbon with another pattern that sparkles, Gust said.
7. Tired of red and green? Try red and blue, Gust said. Purple and teal are also colors to consider.
8. Go pink. Gust said that she's getting a lot of requests for pink holiday decor, from blushes and pastels to bright fuchsia. Pink adds instant happiness.

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