

We were thrilled when Mary invited *Good Housekeeping* into the kitchen of her lovely new house for an exclusive chat about her home style, traditions and tips for stress-free festivities...

PHOTOGRAPHY BRENT DARBY

AT
HOME
WITH

Mary Berry



I always have a family Christmas at home. On Christmas morning we go to church at 8 o'clock and try not to think throughout the sermon of what the plans are for the rest of the day. We have our Christmas dinner at lunchtime, watch the Queen's speech and go out for a walk before it gets dark. Then we have open sandwiches in the evening, before playing games and charades. I'm making a limoncello trifle this year. I just love having the family under one roof and listening to what everyone is up to.

Memory lane

One of my favourite Christmas memories is from years ago, when my children were young and we were celebrating at my parents' house - they put on little plays with their cousins. I'm sure it was very noisy as they rehearsed, but we all thought it was lovely.

Another memory that sticks in my mind is when my husband and I were first married, he gave me a bag of manure for Christmas. It came in a plastic sack from the garden centre, and my mother thought it was the most dreadful thing to give as a gift, but I was thrilled to bits as I love to get things for the garden!

My festive theme

I love doves. That goes back to my childhood, as my mother always had doves decorating the house at Christmas. She bought many of them from America when she was there with my father. Every year our decoration was the same: greenery from the garden and dove decorations flying here, there and everywhere. And so, as my mother did it, I do it. I have white doves wherever I can put them, and after Christmas, I carefully pack them up again. I've had many of them for years - some are more tatty than others! I love them, as white doves represent peace.

Very often I choose red and green for Christmas, but I've branched out with a bit of gold this year. We always have lots of fresh greenery and a real tree, and I always put it in water so it won't drop and I won't have to vacuum up all the needles.

Our new home

My new home is half an hour from my last one. My daughter, Annabel, found it and thought it was just what we'd like. It will be our last house and it's exactly what we



Mary's new kitchen has been designed just for her - it even has special storage for her baking trays

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'I love doves. That goes back to childhood Christmas decorations'

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ON CHAIR, LEFT Cushions, from a selection, Raj Tent Club
ON TABLE, RIGHT Circular Test Tube vase centrepiece, £89, notonthehighstreet.com
THROUGHOUT Baking accessories, Lakeland and David Mellor; decorations, Gisela Graham; accessories, Laura Ashley; crackers, Celebration Crackers; gift wrap, Jane Means, Roger La Borde, Paperchase; ribbon, VV Rouleaux, all from a selection



‘The theme throughout the house is flowers and birds’



wanted. Although we love our old house, we’ve no longer got a big family – it was sad to leave but it’s the sensible thing to do.

Heart of the house

I am so lucky to have a lovely new kitchen. Our kitchen designer, Nick Anderson of Guild Anderson, gave us so many great ideas and he designed and made the kitchen for us. Everything was designed specifically for how I use the kitchen, from my wrapping paper drawer to vertical storage for baking trays. The kitchen is all drawers, as I didn’t want to have to kneel down to search for things in the backs of cupboards. There are so many little touches that I love, too, from my boiling-water tap to the concealed lighting.

I’ve always had an Aga – I love them, and they make the kitchen so warm. My dogs love to sit in front of it. Slate was a new colour for 2018 – I had a grey jumper that I loved, and Aga actually created the colour for me based on that shade. I have a conventional oven as well, for recipe testing, as not everyone has an Aga.

As for the decoration, it all started with finding this fabulous wallpaper with doves on it from Lewis & Wood. The theme of my house is birds and flowers, so the design was perfect, and I love the grey and turquoise colour scheme. We put wallpaper behind the Aga and then sealed it with glass – I don’t think I’ll ever get tired of it.

We’re used to having a separate dining room but decided we didn’t need one any



Mary uses her breakfast table for informal dining with her husband and family. ON TABLE Winter Robin pottery, from a selection, Nicholas Mosse KITCHEN DESIGN COMPANY Guild Anderson

‘I wanted the kitchen to be a restful place’

more. Our kitchen has two tables: one is a round dining table in the window, where we can sit up to 10 people on chairs with lovely padded backs; the other is a rectangular one that we use for everyday dining. Nick made both tables. I wanted to coat them so I could set a water glass down without marking the surfaces. For months they tested the tables to make sure water wouldn't mark them.

On display

I'm a keen collector and have special places for all my collections. I have my sitting hens on display; I've been collecting them for 50 years, ever since I've been married. I can't pass a sitting hen if I see one – they're our friends! I also collect old mugs and candlesticks, thanks to Jane Grigson, who I consider one of the greatest cooks of the last century. I went to her house in Wiltshire many years ago to interview her, and when I walked into the hall, she had a table with about 25 column candlesticks, with wax dripping down, which I loved. So I collect column candlesticks of all different heights.

We are lucky to have a second, smaller kitchen tucked away off the main room, where ingredients can be kept and weighed, and where we can store our big Christmas crockery – it's my higgledy-piggledy kitchen! I wanted the main kitchen to be a lovely restful place, and it is.

♦ Mary Berry's Christmas Party returns to BBC One this December

MARY'S INGREDIENTS FOR A HASSLE-FREE CHRISTMAS

- ★ Always make lists. If you start planning at the beginning of December, you can buy tinned goods, order the turkey and things like that. Once you've done that, you can drop your shoulders and forget about it.
- ★ Buy the best turkey you can afford. Don't be put off by a frozen bird, just make sure it was frozen air cooled and fresh.

- ★ Be organised and delegate. At Christmas, my daughter-in-law's parents do the Christmas pudding and the party games.
- ★ Give home-made presents. You can make these well before Christmas. I'm making cucumber dill pickle because we have so many. If you make something, have a little stock of them and give those as small

presents. It's so personal giving something you've spent time making, and it's great to be able to bring something when you go for drinks with family or friends.

- ★ I'm happy for people to help out on Christmas Day. If someone asks to lend a hand, I give them a little job that I loathe doing, like peeling quails' eggs or preparing sprouts. My

mother always used to do the sprouts, even until she was 105. If grandchildren ask me what they can do to help, I give them plain labels to decorate as place settings for each guest.

- ★ Share the washing-up. It's no chore because you're chattering away with family and you've probably had a glass of wine, too. It's great!

WORDS: JEN CROTHERS. HOME STYLING: CAROLYN BAILEY, JAMES CUNNINGHAM. FASHION STYLING: AMANDA MARCANTONIO. HAIR & MAKE-UP: JO PENFORD. MARY WEARS (OPENING SPREAD PAGES 3, 5, & 8): STAR BLOUSE, RIXO. TROUSERS, MINT VELVET NECKLACE, COAST. MARY WEARS (PAGES 4 & 6): RUFFLE BLOUSE, L.K. BENNETT. TROUSERS, COAST. SHOES, MARKS & SPENCER



‘Be organised and delegate at Christmas’



The kitchen to Mary is not just a place to cook in – it's the very heart of her home

SHOP the LOOK

Recreate Mary's special look with these beautiful pieces...



Doves wallpaper in Aquamarine, £65.52 a roll, Lewis & Wood



Cake servers, £5.99 for a set, HomeSense



Dove Christmas tree decoration, £3.50, Wyevale Garden Centres



Star and Stripe double oven glove, £21.99, Mary Berry for Lakeland



Midsummer Night's Dream chandelier, £375, The French Bedroom Company



Laight Check throw in Duck Egg, £95, Soho Home



Greenwich white wine glasses, £43 for 6, Neptune



Luxury Sparkle crackers, £45 for 6, Sophie Conran



Cameo dinner plate, £10, Creative Tops