

Victoria

ROMANTIC LIVING / INSPIRING WOMEN

The Magic of Christmas

217 GLORIOUS IDEAS

Enchanting Trees
Heirloom Ornaments
Sparkling Parties
Unique Wrappings
& A Host of Angels

**GIFTS FROM
THE HEART**

Our Beautiful
Bûche de Noël
(This One's Easy!)

SPECIAL
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FOR THE SAKE OF simplicity, we left glitter and glass behind, trimming our mantel and tree with beautiful shells instead. "The sea has its own stars," said the children, who loved gluing each shell onto butcher twine for hanging. This page: Antique compote, English Country Antiques shell-covered ball and handmade cards, Loose Ends; glass cloche, Abigail's. Opposite: To lanterns from Aida's Forever, we added a necklace of shells; "Bernadotte" stemware, blue-trimmed china in various patterns, all Villeroy & Boch.

YULE TIDES

If wishes had wings, ours would be to spend Christmas by the sea. A small cottage would do, where we could gather shells for decorations to the chorale of waves and gulls. So we granted ourselves this wish—in order to show that (wherever the season finds you) an ocean-born theme can make Christmas fresh again, a chance to reinvent traditions with gifts from the sea.

PHOTOGRAPHS BY SUSIE CUSHNER PRODUCED BY MARY BALTZ TEXT BY KIM WALLER





A PRESENT WITH PRESENCE, above left, comes wrapped in papers handmade with delicate traces of fibers and leaves. Tie it up with green raffia and top off your natural message with a glued-on shell. Paper, Loose Ends; green tie, Raffit Ribbon; shell, She Sells Sea Shells.

FAR FROM THE HUBBUB of shops and streets, we left the lights on and set out lanterns from Alda's Forever to guide Santa to our cottage, above. Perhaps he'll hear our carols floating out over the sigh of the surf. **IT'S A STARRY, STARRY NIGHT** indoors, as well as out. The large, framed starfish print and smaller shell print, left, are from English Country Antiques; "Alexa" sofa by Mitchell Gold. Even though we opted to celebrate with sea-blues this year instead of the usual holly-berry reds, we'd never, ever leave out the true green of greenery! The wreath and garlands (also above and opposite, top left) are woven of cedar set off with seeded eucalyptus and glistening bay leaves.

FOR CHRISTMAS EVE DINNER, opposite, top left, you can create instant napkin rings by gluing a scallop shell onto thin rope and tucking in a sprig of bay leaves. Below it, plates pretty enough to be presents themselves: "Casa Picco" bread-and-butter and salad plate, white "Chambord" dinner plate and "Casa Azul" platter used as a charger; sturdy "Bernadotte," stemware, all Villeroy & Boch.

A CATCH OF A GIFT—or so the witty use of fishnet over wrapping paper suggests, opposite, top right. Other ways to emphasize your nautical theme: Tie a bowline knot or roll twine ends Navy-style in a flat spiral and glue. The gift rests on a white-painted chair with white-and-blue cushions, from the Swedish Blonde Collection.

"ALL IN THE BOAT there grew a tree, the tippiest tree we ever did see," sang the girls, opposite, bottom right. "Let's launch it!" Once the urge to decorate gets rolling, who knows where it will stop? Both girls wear Dale of Norway sweaters, Lands' End Kids cotton skirts and Ugg sheepskin boots. Hat and mittens on girl at left from Latchfords of Ireland; her top by Ralph Lauren; hat on girl at right by Dale of Norway.

BETTER THAN COINS in your stocking or wishing on a star are these genuine sand dollars and dried starfish, opposite, bottom left, from She Sells Sea Shells, a shop on Florida's Sanibel Island. Try inking them (or any you've gathered) to print images on plain butcher paper—for your own custom wrapping paper. They're also stunning when painted gold or silver. For additional information, see page 104.

*"I saw THREE SHIPS come sailing in on Christmas day in the morning...
Then let us all rejoice again on Christmas day in the morning." —Old Christmas Carol*

