

# Come to the Table: Food blogger spills secrets of imperfect hosting

**I**F YOUR GOAL is to make and keep friends, then forget Pinterest perfection.

That's the message food blogger Abby Turner relates in her new book, "The Living Table: Recipes and Devotions for Everyday Get Togethers" (DaySpring, April 2021).

"Make your home too party perfect and no one will have you over to their place," she told me last week, when I called to congratulate her on her book. "If you invite people into an authentic home with the mess of life, you aren't intimidating."

Well, heck, then come on over!

In 208 deliciously photographed pages (where the food and its presentation look pretty perfect to me), Turner nudges us all toward approachable hospitality, as she doles out oodles of recipes for life's big and small occasions from game night to bridal brunch — with a heavy helping of Bible lessons on the side.

What drew me to her book, however, was not the recipes nor the devotionals, but rather the philosophy of the table as the heart of the home. Forget the hearth; the table is where we catch up, crack up, open up, dream up, speak up and eat up.

And it's where Turner would like more people to gather more often with less stress.

But social media has turned off many would-be hosts, she said. Do the candles really need to match the cocktail napkins? Do the dishes all need to be the same? Do I need to wait to buy a table with a leaf?

No, no and no.

"These misperceptions have scared many away from inviting others into their homes and enjoying the connection that happens



AT HOME WITH  
**Marni Jameson**

when people sit down around the table over food," Turner says.

It's a sentiment she echoes in her blog, "A Table Top Affair," as well as through her popular Insta-

gram and Pinterest posts: Keep gatherings simple, the recipes easy and the focus on the people, not the presentation.

Turner, who is single and 32, and who lives with her two Papillons in Bentonville, Arkansas, where she has a day job working for Walmart in marketing, has figured this out by doing it. Here's what else she spilled during our conversation:

*Marni: What inspired you to become a food blogger and to write "The Living Table"?*

*Abby: When I was in my 20s, I moved around a lot for my work in college athletics. While that was a fun experience, I had little time for creating community or friendships. My mom encouraged me to*

host a dinner party, which I did, even though I only had a table for two. I had friends over, then more friends. That led to my wanting to share my recipes and hosting tips. I figured if I didn't know how to meet others, that probably others were out there also starving for community.

*Marni: I thought I held a record of moving to six houses in four*

*years in the same area. But you lived in six different states in five years. What did that teach you?*

*Abby: When you move so frequently, you develop a formula to find your people, to find where you fit in. The first couple times were hardest. Then I realized that you don't have to meet people just*

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