

MARNI

FROM PAGE 2H

like you. Find ones who share an interest, like a love of sports, or museums, that's enough.

Marni: Talk to me about the table, and why it's such an elemental part of our homes.

Abby: The pandemic has made us especially aware that we are not designed to do life alone. We realized more than ever that something so powerful happens when we sit at the table with others. It's where we connect and share our brokenness and vulnerabilities. Bringing people into your mess is life, and the table is central to that journey. It doesn't matter whether you eat in the dining room or picnic on the lawn. The power is in coming together and connecting.

Marni: What are some of your fa-

vorite hosting tricks?

Abby: One of my go-to tabletop tips is my all-occasion centerpiece. Get a wooden flower box, the kind people hang outside windows. Fill it with a faux boxwood garland or moss, to create a base with structure. Then top it off with small pumpkins in the fall, crayons for back to school, Easter eggs in spring.

Another go-to is the wooden board. If you see a charcuterie board on sale, buy it. If it has a lip, buy it, even if it's not on sale. They are so versatile. I use them for serving everything from breakfast items to desserts. They make anything you serve look so cute. I have 25 to 30 charcuterie boards that would rival anyone's collection.

Marni: Besides concerns about making their homes party perfect, what else prevents people from opening their doors?

Abby: The worry that nobody will

come. I used to worry about that, too. Now I say, are you kidding? Here's the shocker: People want to connect. They want to be invited.

Marni: What do you wish more people knew?

Abby: That you don't have to be Martha Stewart or Rachael Ray to do this. Lean on your grocery stores. They have so many prepared items ready to go. Don't spend a lot of time in the kitchen. And don't worry if your plates don't match. When everything is matching, you risk giving the impression of perfection. If someone asks me for a coaster, I have done too nice a job.

Marni Jameson is the author of six home and lifestyle books, including "Downsizing the Family Home – What to Save, What to Let Go," and "Downsizing the Blended Home – When Two Households Become One." She can be contacted at www.marni-jameson.com.



Drawn to the table — "Stop wasting time waiting for the perfect family, house or table, and start opening your home, cooking for friends and building your tribe one gathering at a time," says author Abby Turner. Photo courtesy of Molly Anne Sandefur/The Living Table.

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