

GATHERING
SETTING THE NATURAL TABLE



KRISTEN CAISSIE
*WITH PHOTOGRAPHY BY
GEMMA & ANDREW INGALLS*

THE ART OF THE NAPKIN FOLD

The ability to elevate a table scape can be found in the oft-overlooked art of the napkin fold.

If there is one element that can transform your table scape, it is the deceptively subtle multipurpose linen napkin. Even if you use the same dishes and flatware at every gathering, if you change up your napkins or even play with varied napkin folds, any gathering can be transformed into an elegant and special occasion.

One basic tip on harnessing the versatile power of the napkin: have a few different color options in your linen closet, so you can vary shades to complement the food, florals, setting and occasion. You can hand fold a napkin in a variety of ways and use a diverse range of materials to tie or shape linens, such as ribbons, floral elements, and napkin rings. See some of our favorite napkin folds on the following pages.





The Kerchief

Serving as the perfect canvas for a small bundle of dried or live florals, this fold lends itself to both formal and casual place settings.

INSIDER HINT: Taking a quick moment to iron the kerchief after it is folded will help to create crisp edges and sharper points.

The Band

There are occasions when the plateware is the star of a table and in these instances I love the simplicity of this fold. By simply wrapping the napkin around the dinner plate it is easy to create and allows your guests to experience the subtleties of the serving ware, be it a dish or a bowl, delicate porcelain or earthy, artistic ceramics.

INSIDER HINT: Depending on the size of your napkins and the desired width, this fold can be done in either thirds or quarters.



The Tuck

I love a bit of asymmetry in a place setting. Here, instead of shifting the salad plate to the side, which you will see throughout the book, the napkin is nestled under one side of the salad plate in a tuck fold. While it's not always necessary, you can style this setting with a menu or with an accent of florals, herbs or dried grass.

INSIDER HINT: The rectangular fold of the tuck is simply the band with an added fold on each end.

The Roll

A napkin ring provides the perfect opportunity to add another layer of artistry to your table. From carved wood or a buttery leather cuff to a more formal metal ring, a rolled napkin secured this way mimics the vertical lines of the flatware for a dash of table setting flair.

INSIDER HINT: Napkin rings don't need to be purchased; you can get creative and wrap your napkins with items you may already have at home—ribbon, scraps of fabric, or even a floral element from the garden.