

A PLAYFUL PURPLE PARTY

Courtney Tarrt Elias

Courtney Tarrt Elias is no shrinking violet. Her legendary soirees are as richly vibrant as her personality and Houston residence. She is known for her love of color, and especially her fearless use of purple—a color often associated with creativity, splendor, and devotion. All are traits that seem appropriate when describing this vivacious interior designer.

The home she shares with her husband, Mark, is the epicenter for engaging family and friends. For the dynamic duo, entertaining is never a small affair. Colleagues, kids, acquaintances, neighbors—everyone loves dropping in for a visit. Both Courtney and Mark know exactly how to provide a fabulous feast with effortless elegance. Their strategy? Divide and conquer. Mark takes over the grill and Courtney tackles the sides.

When it comes to the menu, they like to keep their guests guessing. On this occasion, they invited everyone over for a “low-key” dinner. Much to the delight and surprise of all in attendance, the couple then pulls out all of the stops and fêtes friends with a formal table and an old school menu. Blood orange romaine salad, roasted purple new potatoes, grilled corn, brisket, sausage, crème brûlée, and assorted artisanal macarons in rich plum hues grace the table.

Chic, colorful, and collected are the underlying principles of Courtney’s tabletop selections. A hand-embroidered periwinkle Mexican Otomi tablecloth is the jumping off point for the party. It is one of many in her collection. Over the summer she purchased several at the Santa Fe International Folk Art Market for such an occasion.

“People underestimate the power of purple,” she sighs. “A table should be playful and a dinner party should be fun.” Lavender, violet, amethyst, and mauve are just a few of the shades in the evening lineup. Richard Ginori Rapallo china is the star of the show. Swans, flowers, and ribbons, in shades of purple and pink against metallic gold accents, adorn the dinnerware. The service was a christening gift from Courtney’s godmother. By the time she was twelve years old, Courtney owned a complete dessert set, including cake stands and powdered sugar shakers.

In lieu of a large flower arrangement, the hostess turned to her friend Jeff for a one-of-a-kind centerpiece. A clear glass vessel filled with a vibrant assortment of farmer’s market produce takes center stage alongside complementary blooms and rare orchids from his garden. White-veined, red-leaf radicchio was the color inspiration. Massive grapes, artichokes, radishes, and basil act as supporting players. The monochromatic palette lends a cohesive feel. As a parting gift, everyone leaves with a few of the orchids—a meaningful and personal touch to end the evening.







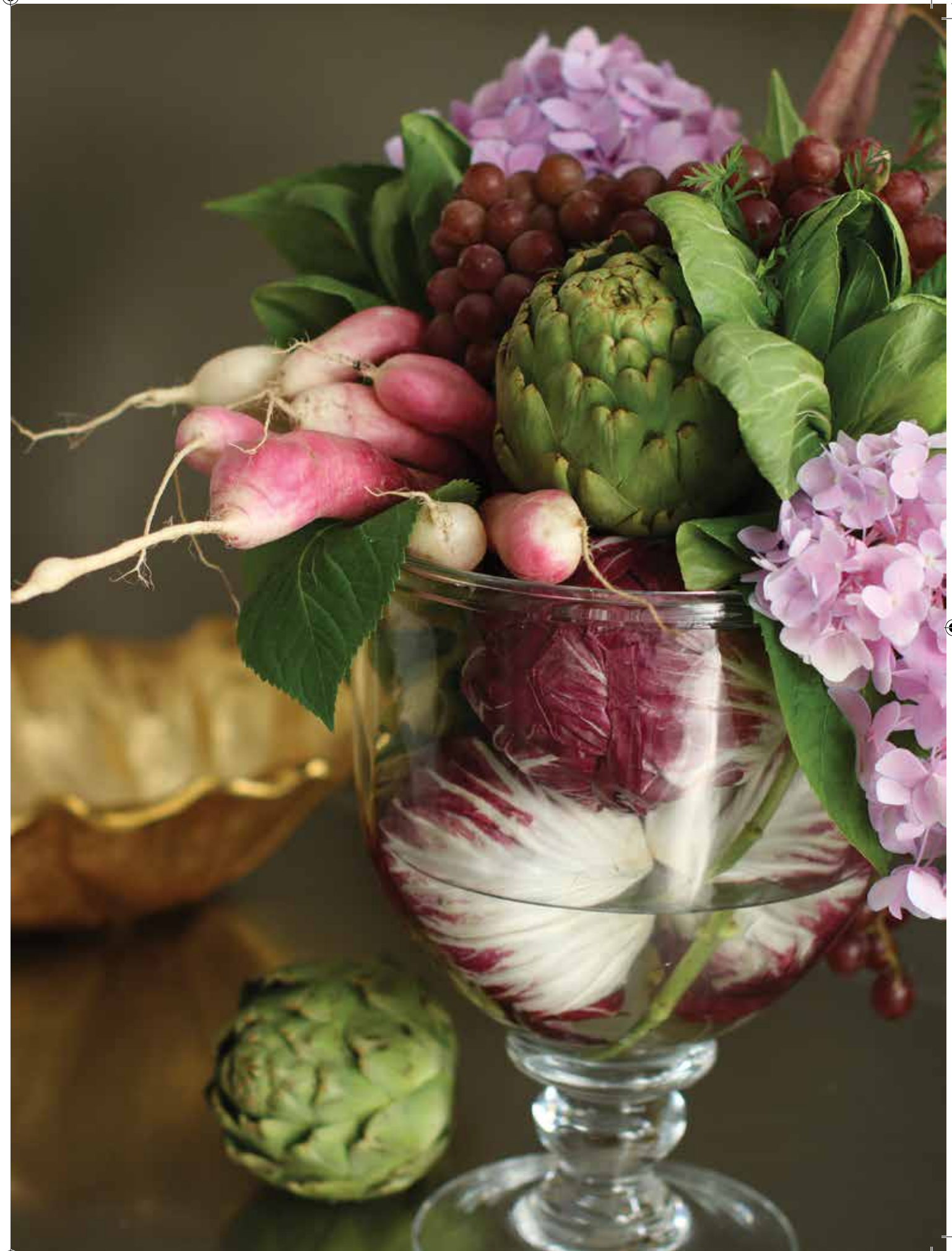
THE POWER OF PURPLE

Purple can be both dramatic and understated, depending on the hue or shade. It is a fun, versatile, and calming color.

Think of purple as a neutral. You can pair it with almost any color—black, red, yellow, orange, and chartreuse are particularly apt partners. The regal pigment can add richness to any space or drama to a simple room.

A palette ranging from light lavenders to deep plums and a few strategically placed accents are all you need to create a festive atmosphere. Purple works well with natural elements like seagrass or bamboo, and it looks equally good with metallics or marble.

Warm purples can make a dining room feel cozy, while dark, rich shades provide an exquisite backdrop for crystal and silver. Use purple accessories to brighten up a table and add depth to a neutral color scheme.



ROASTED PURPLE POTATOES WITH TARRAGON

Serves 6

In South America, purple potatoes are considered a food of the gods. Their unique, vibrant color and health benefits are making them increasingly popular in the United States, and these days most supermarkets and farmer's markets offer eye-catching assortments of the purple spuds. Adirondack blue, purple creamer, and purple majesty are just a few of the varieties. In addition to their fun shades, they are an excellent source of potassium, vitamin C, vitamin B6, and the antioxidant anthocyanin.

1 ½ pounds purple potatoes, quartered
3 tablespoons white truffle oil
3 large sprigs fresh tarragon, leaves removed and finely chopped
1 ½ teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon cracked black pepper
Fresh rosemary sprigs for garnish, optional

Preheat the oven to 350°F.

In a large bowl, toss the potatoes with the truffle oil, tarragon, salt, and pepper.

Transfer the potato mixture to a sheet pan and roast in the preheated oven for 25 minutes. Flip the potatoes and roast until fork-tender and lightly charred, about 15 additional minutes. Transfer to a large dish and serve immediately.

GRILLED CORN ON THE COB

Serves 8

8 medium ears sweet corn, in the husk
1 stick (8 tablespoons) unsalted butter, softened
3 tablespoons minced fresh basil
1 tablespoon minced fresh flat-leaf parsley
½ teaspoon sea salt
1 cup grated cotija cheese or crumbled feta cheese

Place the corn in a stockpot. Add cold water to cover. Soak for 20 minutes, then drain. Prepare a gas or charcoal grill to medium heat.

Carefully peel back the corn husks to within 1 inch from the bottom of the husk. Remove the silk.

In a small bowl, mix the butter, basil, parsley, and salt until thoroughly combined. Spread the butter mixture over the corn.

Rewrap the corn in the husks. Tie the husks closed with kitchen twine.

Grill the corn over medium heat, turning frequently, until tender, 25 to 30 minutes.

Cut the twine and peel back the husks. Sprinkle with cotija or feta cheese.

SELECTING AND GRILLING CORN ON THE COB

The best way to select corn on the cob is to pull back the husks. Look to see if the kernels are evenly spaced and consistent in size and color. Look for tassels that are yellowish brown and sticky to the touch.

Discard corn with small brown wormholes in the husk. If you cannot peel back the husk, use your fingers to feel the kernels through the husk. Make certain the kernels feel plump and plentiful.

A corn husk should be bright green and tightly wrapped. A yellow or dry husk is a sign of older corn.

