



RECIPE DEVELOPMENT, FOOD STYLING,
PHOTOGRAPHY, AND ARTICLE BY LIZ BUSHONG

As the ground awakens from the wintertime slumber, tulip and daffodil stems push through the soil about to burst open with colorful fresh blooms. Bright yellow forsythia bushes and cherry blossom branches begin to pop open profusely with small breathtaking delicate flowers. The scent of sweet hyacinths and greening new grass alert our senses that spring has arrived. In the early morning hours, we listen to chirping robins singing their joyful songs as they gather twigs to build their nests and bunnies can be seen here and there as they hop across the fresh new lawn. All creatures great and small welcome the lively splendor of spring marveling at God's creative works.

What says "Spring-time" better than flowers? Whether you are hosting a luncheon or Sunday family dinner, a lovely springtime arrangement of your favorite floral can take center stage on your dining room table. For an easy, breezy centerpiece, embrace your spontaneous spirit and head to the floral department of your local grocery store or favorite greenhouse. Most merchants will showcase potted tulips, daffodils, hyacinths, primrose, moss, ivy and many types of ferns that you can place in a basket for a stunning and simple centerpiece.

To create a springtime centerpiece for your table, gather some of the season's best blooming potted bulbs, primrose and ferns. Place 3- 5 potted blooms at different levels inside a plastic lined basket at various heights. No need to remove the plants from the pot. Cover and tuck moss over the potted flowers and between spaces inside the basket. A good mix of flowers would include two to three colors with different textures and heights. Leafy green ivy and low packed ground cover with reindeer moss will add to the fullness of the arrangement. For a bit of whimsy add a small bird sitting on a faucet with dripping water crystal. An empty bird nest would also be a great touch to this spring arrangement.

After the flowers are spent, you can plant the bulbs in your garden for next spring. A note about tulips, you can plant Gladiolas and Dahlias this spring for flowering this summer. In September as fall arrives plant tulip and daffodils for next spring. Spring bulbs should be planted in the fall or early winter because they require a long period of cool temperatures in order for them to flower. In the fall, it is important to get the bulbs in the ground before the ground freezes. They need time to develop strong roots. You

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could also plant bulbs in individual containers as the merchants do forcing the bulbs to grow.

My sweet bunny JJ was excited about spring too! He is an adorable New Zealand white bunny with red eyes. JJ allowed me to take a few photos of him checking out the floral arrangement while I was putting it together. He looked out the window, chewed a few willow branches, smelled the flowers by standing on his hind feet, and finally lay down beside the finished arrangement.

With spring's earliest blooms, you can celebrate everyday dining with ambiance that is fresh and vibrant. Royal blue, bright yellow and shades of green create a beautiful springtime palette. Evoke this palette with white and cobalt blue square plates and accessories. Yellow tightly rolled napkins look like flowers blooming as they stand in water glasses. For a take home favor, a small cobalt blue vase with

a single rose sits pretty at each place setting. To continue the color scheme of cobalt, yellow and white, the Lemon Almond mini tart greets each individual guest at their place setting for an after dinner dessert. The crust is made with ground almonds and filled with a tangy lemon curd-type filling then baked to perfection. When serving this dessert, add a dollop of fresh whipped cream and lemon zest.

Invite springtime into your home with this creative and fanciful setting that boasts this season's vibrant scents and colors. You don't have to be a green thumb to enjoy the beauty of the season. Bring the outdoors in with a beautiful potted arrangement. Like a breath of fresh air, after the morning dew, breathe in the cool breeze of this new season with a living arrangement that will linger in memories.

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Lemon Almond Tart

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INGREDIENTS:

1 unbaked almond crust recipe-chilled 1 hour
1-1/4 cups granulated sugar
2 Tablespoons all purpose flour
1/3 cup lemon juice from concentrate
3 large eggs
1/2 cup butter, melted, no substitutes
1 teaspoon lemon zest, optional
Garnish: lemon zest, mint or parsley leaf, assorted berries

ALMOND TART CRUST RECIPE

1/4 cup slivered almonds
1 cup all purpose flour
1/4 cup granulated sugar
1/2 cup butter, softened, no substitutes
1 egg
1 teaspoon lemon juice from concentrate

In food processor, process almonds until ground. Add flour, sugar and butter, process until crumbly. Add egg and juice, process until dough forms a ball. Wrap dough in plastic wrap, chill one hour.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Prepare Almond Crust, pres pastry into lightly greased 4-4" tart pans with removable bottoms. Set aside. In large mixing bowl, combine sugar, flour and lemon juice. Beat to combine. Add eggs, one at a time, beat after each addition. Add melted butter and mix to blend. Pour into Almond Crust shells. Bake at 325 for 30-35 minutes or until set. Cool on wire rack.

TO SERVE: Remove sides and bottom of tart pan, top cooled tart with fresh whipped cream, fruit or mint leaves.

Yield: 4-4" tarts

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Liz Bushong is an expert in the three-dimensional art of entertaining. She transforms simple dining occasions into beautiful and memorable moments by adding a touch of her own "sassy" style. For the past several years Liz been entrusted to decorate the White House for several Holidays. She is a featured monthly guest chef/designer on Daytime Tri-cities, Daytime Blue Ridge and other television shows. Liz is the author of the Just Desserts and Sweets & Savories cookbook as well as a contributing writer for VIPSEEN and Bella Magazine. For more information about Liz go to www.lizbushong.com or www.serveitupsassy.com

