

# TABLE STORIES

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TABLES FOR  
ALL OCCASIONS

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An Bogaerts

**Lannoo**

# YOU'VE GOT TO BREAK FREE

by AN BOGAERTS

*Welcome, come in, take off your jacket and take a seat at one of my tables.* What are you looking for today? A little romantic elegance? Some boho chic? Or maybe a more minimalistic table, nothing too fussy? I can offer you all of them in this book. But let me present you with today's specialty: a different perspective. A chance to wow your guests. To welcome them as if they were kings and queens, to feed them with memories that will last forever. A table is so much more than a plate, some cutlery, and two glasses. It is the one thing that sets the tone for a romantic lunch, a family picnic, a gathering with friends, or a wedding celebration. It is the most subtle way to tell someone: 'You are so very welcome here.'

Promise me you won't put this book down after I tell you that I'm no expert in setting the perfect table. You can ask anyone who has had the privilege (ahem) of being invited to one of my dinners. My husband can cook, in fact he's fantastic. But as far as my tables go, it has been kind of disappointing, if I say so myself. I have a thing with napkins: that definitely speaks to my advantage. And I love beautiful tableware. But since we are in the process of renovating our beloved seventies house, our beautiful tableware is packed up in the basement.

Actually when I come to think of it: the best tables I created in the last few years were inspired by Spiderman and unicorns. Not quite the stylish input you were hoping for, I guess. Don't get me wrong: I have composed the most breathtaking tablescape, organized the most instagrammable dinner parties, and hosted the cutest children's parties. But so far all of that has happened in my head. So for this book project it was clear I had to outsource the creative part.

I might not possess the perfect decoration skills, but good taste - yes, I have that in abundance. And that's exactly what I relied on when I selected the twenty-two amazing talents in this book. As proponents of their style, and as creatives in their profession, they are the absolute best. From Belgium, Croatia, Denmark, Germany, and Italy to Australia, France, the UK, and the US they are all gifted with the talent of creating magic. Some excel at arranging flowers, others think in colors or have a great eye for framing the perfect image. Some are designers, other are stylists, florists, or event planners. Some like talking for hours and hours whilst others prefer to respond

to me in two-sentence emails. But they all share the same conviction. *That the table is an extension of one's personality.* Which gives this book a whole new dimension. We are not talking about ways to fold napkins; we're talking about you. Who are you and what message do you want to give to your guests? Luckily, we have twenty-two inspiring creatives to guide you on that journey.

The art of setting the table has become more and more popular over the last few years. No surprise there. The whole culinary scene has transformed beyond recognition. *Chefs have become rock stars, restaurants are practically art galleries, and tables have become their business cards, mainly on social media.* And as recreational chefs are more skilled than ever at reaching the same level as their gastronomic idols, so are the DIY stylists. Scrolling down Pinterest and Instagram in search for inspiration, tons of women and men around the globe have gradually discovered their own ability to create a magical setting at the dinner table. But then something scary happened. All these enthusiastic decorators saw themselves trapped in what is called the 'creative bubble' without even knowing it. They became slaves to the algorithm. *The downside of Pinterest and Instagram is that those social media have the tendency of showing the expected.* Of offering you more of the same. So whoever has done a search on boho beige table settings gets inundated with pampas pictures for the rest of their life.

*If this book is anything, it is your gateway to breaking out of that creative bubble.* A way of discovering styles and creations you would never have looked for on Pinterest. A subtle nudge to explore some out-of-the-ordinary combinations, to try evoking that wow-effect with your guests. Because guess what? Your entire table is on Instagram. They have all seen the same décors scrolling by again and again. Attaining that wow-effect won't get any easier in the future. The bar is set really high and that is our own fault. Visual social media have made beautiful tables seem so easy. The art of wowing your guest lies in stepping away from picture-perfect expectations. Create something your friends and family wouldn't expect. *Give room to serendipity, one of the greatest luxuries of our future.* This book aims to be the ideal inspiration for doing just this. In this book I know you'll discover your personal style, but you'll also discover tables outside the bubble you have created thanks to the algorithms in your social media. Follow your heart when selecting color schemes and materials. *Don't aim for perfection, aim for personality.*

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# SPRING

The good news: during springtime setting an inviting table is pretty easy. All your guests are excited to see fresh flowers again when temperatures start rising. Just pick some nice vases, put some colorful flowers in there, and you're done. The downside though: an overabundance of options. Self-control is key. Don't lose yourself buying every attractive bloom you see at the florist's. Pick a color scheme and stick with it. Pastels are a safe option in spring and are easier to combine than bright hues. A rewarding choice for Easter parties, for weddings, baby showers, and children's celebrations. *Spring evokes this feeling of a fresh start, of new beginnings.* This is a fantastic sentiment to focus on when you create your table. Go wild with tulips in soft pink, add some crocus or - a personal favorite - an overload of soft purple hyacinths.

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# Saluting the Imperfect

with MARIE MICHELSEN

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*Belgium*

@MICHELSENMARIE



Ratio molds the soul of every object. For Belgian designer Marie Michielssen creating furniture and accessories with a soul is an important goal, if not the most important. "I am not sure where this preoccupation with ratio comes from. I was trained as a graphic designer and am passionate about architecture; both disciplines have definitely shaped me as a designer." For most of her career, Marie has worked for interior design label Serax. A brand she has a very special relationship with, not only because she is married to its CEO Axel Van den Bossche. "I used to design small accessories like candleholders and the ubiquitous cactus vase.

In recent years, my work underwent a transformation. My designs answer an internal urge to create my own world. A world that balances on the fine line between art and design. My objects are becoming more sculptural, more authentic." The same evolution continues in Marie's passion for entertaining friends and family in their beautiful historic loft in Antwerp. "I cherish the people around me; it gives me great joy to set a beautiful table and cook a delicious meal." Since Serax is a brand that specializes in tableware - some of the world's best restaurants serve their food on Serax plates - Marie is spoiled for choice in that department. "I am fascinated by contrasts. I love mixing the old with the new, the colorful with the natural, the rough with the smooth. Contrasts add an exciting tension to a table. That makes a table interesting to look at, and to eat at. "I draw a lot of inspiration from still lifes, the work of the Flemish Primitives for instance. The harmony they create in their paintings is amazing, the balance rouses a sense of tranquility.

| Tranquility is something  
| we all look for these days.

In my designs and in my tables I try to combine different shapes and different materials but unite them in a particular formal language. They must evoke a sense of unity. "I have been creating for the past thirty years. At this stage of my life I have the freedom to do whatever I please. That may well be the greatest luxury of all. I also allow myself the freedom to fail. It is crucial to be able to recognize when things are not that good, or processes that don't run smoothly.













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MARIE MICHIELSSEN

That's why I love the actual creating. Feeling an object with my own two hands and seeing it grow between my fingers as I sculpt. Always driven by a gut feeling. The same gut feeling I use when dressing a table. I don't follow any fixed procedure when creating an inviting décor.

I recently designed my very first dining table in wood, I love experimenting on it.

"My feeling for beauty and decoration definitely runs in the family. My mother and grandmother both loved to fill their houses with fascinating objects they found at flea markets. They inspire me so much, and I try to recreate that same authenticity by combining different tableware collections. I salute the imperfection of tableware and decoration that aren't an obvious match. Last year I fell in love with the tableware of Ann Demeulemeester, the renowned Belgian fashion designer. The bright green may be an unusual choice for a dinner table but, to me, that's what makes it so interesting to work with." Working with her creative friends is another aspect Marie finds interesting. Stylists, photographers, and designers that help her create the unique universe she exhibits both at Serax and through Instagram. "I love to surround myself with the amazing people I have had the honor to meet over the past decades. I value their opinions, I savor their companionship."



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MARIE MICHELSEN



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MARIE MICHELSEN







## HOW TO TELL *Marie Michielssen's* STORY ON YOUR TABLE

Don't be afraid of contrasts: *mix the old with the new, the colorful with the natural, the rough with the smooth.* This will create an exciting tension on your table.

Think about balance and ratio: whilst creating your tablescape, step back now and then, and see if your décor is balanced. That *balance will evoke a sense of harmony.*

Perfection is dull. To avoid things looking too perfectly matched, *combine different sets of tableware.*

A tranquil tablescape doesn't mean you have to shy away from color. Even a calm, balanced table can have *a splash of color.* A dash of green often beautifully complements the blooms and twigs you have chosen.

You can't go wrong with *natural materials* like glass, wood, paper, and linen. These natural touches reinforce the unity and sense of balance of your tablescape.

An understated table *doesn't need elaborate flower decorations.* Find a pretty branch in your garden.

Remember this: Whatever you *put your heart and soul into* will be cherished by your friends and family.