

# CREATING MEMORABLE EXPERIENCES THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

12/16/20



Contributed by Michiel Perry of [Black Southern Belle](#)



Photography by Chantilly Lace Photography

For me, the holiday season is a celebration of family – our heritage, history, memories, and milestones. Holiday celebrations are always multigenerational affairs, with great aunts to grandbabies coming together to enjoy Lowcountry family recipes, decked halls, Gullah Geechee traditions, and delicious smells that are known to bring over the neighbors. Those who know me know I absolutely love to entertain at home, especially during the holidays. Southern hospitality is all about creating memorable moments for my guests. We host dinner parties, holiday wine mixers, front porch brunches, business gatherings, and food experiences. My Gullah heritage shines through in my cultural decorations, menu, and little surprises I incorporate. Whether inviting a Lowcountry chef to demonstrate how to cook a Gullah classic or baking a generational recipe for guests and giving them the recipe and ingredients as party favors, I always bring my culture into all my holiday hosting.



Photography by Haystack Media Co.

With two children of my own, I've loved creating new traditions with the entire family. One of my favorite memories was hosting our first-holiday dinner after the birth of our son. My father brought his best crop of collard greens and vegetables, and my mother and I cooked our family recipes together while my son slept in my husband's arms. We had family and friends over to enjoy the food, and family ate my traditional seafood pasta with the greatest compliment of packing leftovers for them to take home. In the Lowcountry if your food was really good, people will take leftovers and I wear it as a badge of honor.

In Gullah heritage, community fellowship during the holidays is a deep-held tradition. There are plenty of creative ways to gather with family, friends, and the community virtually and socially distanced, while keeping long-held heritage traditions going or making new ones. This year, we have a few ideas to create unforgettable holiday memories weaving in cultural inspiration.



Photography by Haystack Media Co.

## FAMILY DECORATIONS

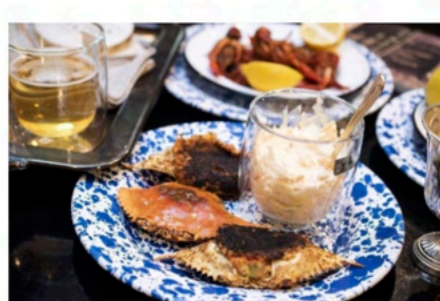
For many, decorating the house is a family affair. This year, if you cannot be near your family, why not bring the entire family together through your holiday decorations. Create decorations with family photos, heirlooms, postcards from travel, and cultural inspiration. I feel closer to my family and Gullah heritage when the holiday decor has touches of Lowcountry style. Bringing in oyster shells, Indigo, Gullah art, sweetgrass, and other decorations remind me of my family and beloved memories. Surprise a family member by decorating a family photo wreath and placing it on their porch. You could also decorate an older family member's porch or yard while they watch from the window.



Photography by Haystack Media Co.

## VIRTUAL HOLIDAY TOUR OF HOMES

I love visiting friends and family's homes to see how they have decorated, whether it's driving around to look at lights or seeing how they deck their halls. This year, invite them into your homes with a virtual holiday tour of homes. You can get the entire family involved, even the kids, pre-record on your phone, go live on social media, or FaceTime to let the kids show off their handmade decorations. You can share your favorite ornaments or the 12-foot tree decorated with family photos and memorabilia.



Photography by Chantilly Lace Photography

## GULLAH WINE + FOOD EXPERIENCE

Being of Gullah heritage, food has always been an essential part of my life. Lowcountry dishes include foods cultivated and grown in the coastal South; rice, shellfish, root vegetables, and game are staples. Today, these ingredients continue to be the highlights of Gullah recipes and our family's generational dishes. Host a virtual Gullah wine + food experience by inviting a chef or mixologist to demonstrate how to prepare a signature Lowcountry dish or drink. Friends and family can prepare the item along with the guest expert or just watch while chatting with everyone online. For an extra touch of hospitality, ship your guests a local ingredient from the recipe or a pre-made dessert from your favorite bakery. I always order [Charleston Chewies from Carolima's Lowcountry Cuisine](#) during the holidays.

## OPENING THE GIFT OF HERITAGE

My ancestors brought their culture rich in African influence with them to America. The holidays included community-wide gifting of homemade meals, candy, and fruit shared with visiting neighbors. This year, give the gift of heritage by sending family and friends a booklet with family recipes, photos, and memorable family stories. We will be sending gifts from local Lowcountry Gullah-owned businesses including [Bowman Vineyards](#) cider and honey, [Marigold Living Naaz](#) and [Anna](#) placemats, Gullah Art Postcards, and [Holy Spirits! Charleston Culture Through Cocktails](#) book by Cocktail Bandits, Taneka Reaves and Johnny Caldwell. Plan a time for the elders in your family to watch the children unwrap their gifts online.



Photography by Fay Money Studio

The holidays may be very different this year, but one thing remains the same: creating memorable moments with family and friends. The spirit of Gullah culture is to preserve our history, especially during the holidays. This is why I share my cultural history and experiences through Black Southern Belle. Through curated food experiences, unique holiday hosting, thoughtful planning, and creative gifting, you can connect and make memories with family and friends, too, no matter where they are.