When it comes to flower arranging, the only "rule" is to make sure your arrangement is low enough so it's not blocking guests' views of other guests. If you're clueless about flower arranging, a florist can give you suggestions or eve prepare a sample arrangement you can copy. Don't be afraid to ask for a lesson.

A few well-placed arrangements can enhance your space and add personality and life- think entryway, coffee table, mantelpiece, bar, buffet, or sideboard. Don't forget your guest bathroom- even a small vase containing a bud or two will add elegance and charm. Here are some tips on using flowers to set the stage for your party:

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Just like produce, pick what looks freshest and best to you.

- A centerpiece is just that- an arrangement for the center of your dining table. It doesn't have to be just one arrangement, however; you can easily fill small vases and place them along the length of the table, or group them in clusters at each guest's place. Single large blooms floating in shallow bowls make a stunning centerpiece.
- Keep it simple- choose one to three colors and one to three shapes or textures.
- Odd numbers work best: one, three, or five of each color, shape, or texture.
- When you're feeling more confident, choose multiple colors that harmonize.
- Colors that are analogous (next to each other on the color wheel) are often more sophisticated when paired than you might expect. Try combinations of red/orange or red/pink. Hold the flowers together in your hands to see if you like the combinations.
- Let the seasons inspire you: soft shades of pinks to magenta and pale greens for spring; bright orange, yellow, and blue for summer; fiery reds, burnt orange, deep purple, and gold with chocolate brown for accents in the fall; all white for winter with greens or tiny red berries.
- Take your color scheme from something you love that speaks to you: your kilim carpet, a favorite fabric with unusual colors, or a bird print. It's a great way to train your eye for pleasing color combinations.

- Flowers with strong scents are better for the powder room or entryway than on the dining or buffet table, where they can overwhelm the aroma of the food.
- Let the vase show off the flowers. Choose a vase or container and hold the image in your mind (or bring a digital photo) when you choose the flowers. Or let the vase dictate what will flatter it. It's kind of like putting an outfit together- imagine a chocolate brown bottom with a deep pink top, for example.
- Subtly echo the color of the food you're serving in the floral arrangements- using pinks and greens if you're serving salmon and asparagus, for example, or yellows and reds if you're having polenta and heirloom tomato sauce. We're not suggesting that everything should match by any means, but it's lovely to see colors reverberate on the table.
- Borrow a trick from food magazine stylists: Go one step further and dress to match your color scheme. The overall effect can be playful or subtle- and chances are people will notice and comment favorably Check out the next dinner party article you come across and see how the hosts are styled.