

Nothing Too Precious

Author delivers a slyly rebellious take on entertaining

By Melanie McGee Bianchi

She only recently changed the name of her long-time Waynesville design business, Noland Interiors. After 30 years, however, switching to Kathryn Greeley Designs was a mere technicality. Elegant but open, Greeley is a woman vividly acquainted with her own style.

“My design philosophy is ‘collected,’ not ‘decorated,’” she says. “I don’t like it when the inside of someone’s house looks like a designer backed up a truck and unloaded all the contents of their showroom. That’s why I’ve never kept a lot of inventory. I want the interiors I design to be a reflection of my clients’ lives.”

Greeley’s latest endeavor is also her first foray in publishing. Her coffee-table book *The Collected Tabletop: Inspirations for Creative Entertaining* (Greenleaf Book Group Press, 2011) urges readers to mix aesthetics. Fine antiques, she says, can mingle with campier vintage items (like old milk bottles), with contemporary handcrafted ware, and even with budget items from a big-box discount store.

In *Tabletop*, the author stages themed parties using her own extensive collections of tableware and accents. Strikingly photographed by J. Weiland, the spreads include an “Old-Hollywood Martini Party,” a “Black-Tie Birthday Celebration,” a “High on the Hog Bar-

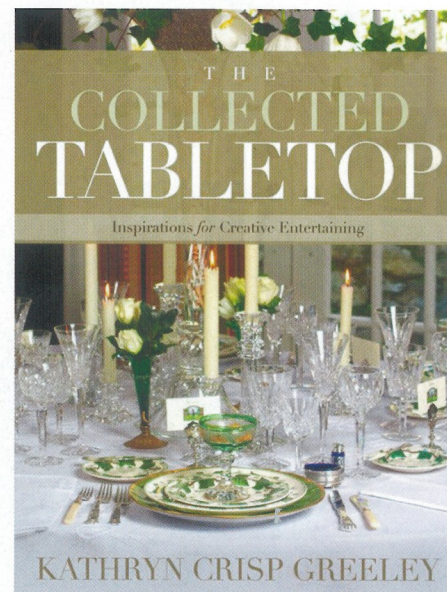
B-Que,” and a “Fall for Football” revel. Beautiful as they are, though, the tableaux are meant to inspire, not intimidate.

It’s not really time, trouble, or expense that keeps most people from entertaining, believes Greeley: “Almost always, it’s just a lack of confidence.”

Carolina Home + Garden caught up with the author on the eve of her book launch and gained a few personal pointers.

CH+G: *The Collected Tabletop puts forth a fairly radical notion: you aim to abolish the division between “everyday” ware and items reserved only for company.*

K.G.: Nothing is too precious to use. I feel so strongly about that. People consider the items they have available for entertaining only in light of their fine china or silver, which they received 20 years ago when they got married, or from a grandparent or other relative. I say, get it out where you can easily access it. Collections are not for hiding behind the doors of cabinets or china cupboards. If you break something,



so what? It’s never going to bring you or your friends or family any joy all packed away in zippered plastic.

You assert that the freshest style comes from mixing looks — contemporary with vintage, high-end with low. Why?

It’s the only way to create a personal style that’s truly your own. In the “Fall for Football” tabletop, I use a client’s antique Majolica along with some local hand-thrown pottery. I encourage people to shop in antique and vintage stores for one-of-a-kind pieces to help build their collections, to find something that really speaks to them. One set style is so static, so predictable; interest is created by surprise. Everyone wants to go green these days, and reusing items this way is really the ultimate in green décor.

What about budget concerns?

There are lovely pieces at every price point. The chapter “The Blue Plate Special” revolves around a collection of Blue Willow [china], some old and some new. Even Ingles sells Blue Willow, which would be perfectly