

# CELEBRATE

*Explore a sophisticated take on spooky this Halloween.*



## The Dark Side

Where moody hues and collections of curiosities make unexpectedly chic Halloween and party decor.

For Gwen Hefner (@themakerista on Instagram), Halloween is a celebration of the season she's loved ever since she first read Mary Shelley's classic, *Frankenstein*. Her Halloween decor style is an homage to that sort of mad science but with a side of "dark academia"—the trending social media aesthetic that puts a Gothic spin on traditional collegiate style. The look is built around idealized details associated with higher education, literature, and classical art. Dimly lit library shelves stuffed with vintage books, old paintings and collections of oddities, ornate candlesticks, and dark wood all create a sense of richness and mystery. "I want things to feel spooky and creepy but beautiful," Gwen says.



Meet the Maker  
Gwen

The creative visionary behind the popular website and social media account *The Makerista*, Gwen is known for her self-described modern-traditional aesthetic and love of thrifting.



Sticks and Bones

On the table, *above*, Gwen creates a boneyard using a bed of moss and fake bones with thrifted silver and mercury glass candlesticks. "You can never have too much candlelight when you're going Goth," she says.

Resting Place

Gwen combines vintage pieces (dinner plates, goblets), *left*, with modern ones (crackle chargers, geometric salad plates, 3-D place mats), all within a silver, gold, and black color scheme. A playful plastic spider tames the fancy.



Haunting  
Tableau

Gwen's eerie-but-beautiful approach is on full display on the console table, above. Stone balusters set a stately base for a scroll candelabra and a footed bowl full of grapes, gourds, and greenery that emulates an old-world still life. A faux skull and a stack of skeleton bones under glass serve up the spooky factor.

Masked Man

A simple black mask cheekily disguises a white bust, above left, perched on a clever pedestal of on-theme books.

Past Perfect

Dried blooms, foliage, and silk roses in deep colors make up the blood-red arrangement, left. Dark linens topped with torn gauze and a headless winged statue play up the Gothic effect. Thrifted amber bottles evoke Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory.



Good  
Mysteries

Black books without their dust jackets play into the mysterious dark academia effect. Gwen displays her found curiosities—a decaying gourd and fungi from a potpourri mix—under glass cloches. Decorative skulls and busts add elegant humor.



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## Party Time Setting the Mood

Ready to go dark? Try these creepy-chic party details inspired by Gwen's decor.

### Cookies

Black gel food coloring, blackberry preserves, and poppy seeds give these cookies their dusky good looks. For the thumbprints, add a blackberry and piped chocolate legs to create spiders.

### Flowers

Yes, the dahlias really are watching you, thanks to wiggle eyes (find at crafts stores). Gently attach with glue dots or double-stick or florists tape.

### Cocktail

Put a bloody spin on a margarita with the addition of blackberry puree. Dip the rim in coarse black sugar and garnish with a paper moth-topped skewer of berries.

### Pumpkin

Gold wire, rubber spiders, and spray paint create this modern, no-carve design (how-to on page 104).



PHOTOS: (COOKIES) KELSEY HANSEN, FOOD STYLING: KELSEY MOYLAN; (FLOWERS) JACOB FOX, ARRANGING: SHELLY SARVER; (DRINK) JACOB FOX, PRODUCED BY: LESLIE POYZER; (PUMPKIN) JASON DONNELLY, PRODUCED BY: ELAINE KOONCE