

GORGEOUS GOURDS

➤ For many florists, Turkey Day is not the boon it once was. According to SAF's 2014 post holiday survey, 44 percent of responders experienced a drop in Thanksgiving sales — consistent with results for the past seven years.

Aware of the steady decline but unwilling to accept it, the ladies of Madeline's Flowers in Edmond, Oklahoma — Barbara Bilke and her daughters, Lenzee and Lacey — brainstormed last fall how to get flowers back on the dinner table.

The typical Madeline's customer, they concluded, was anti-“long and low” candelabra centerpieces and instead gravitated to petite designs using bright colors, lots of texture and intriguing containers. The ticket to a fruitful Thanksgiving, they decided, was designing festive impulse buys.

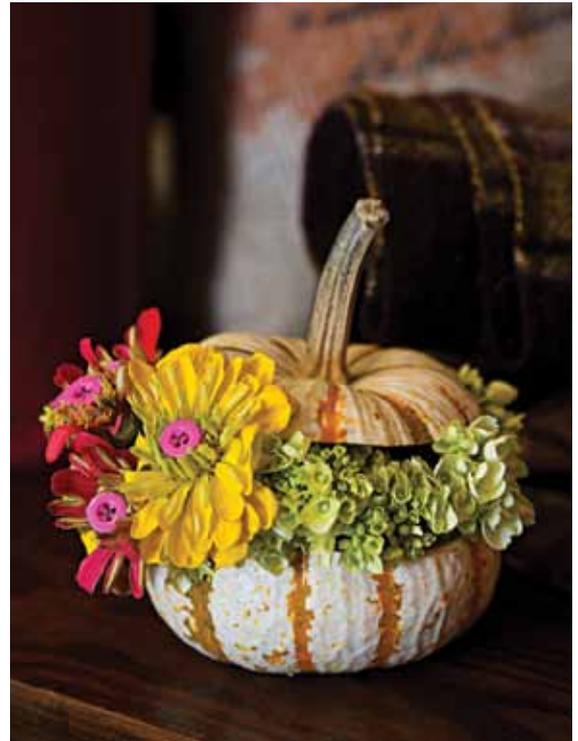
Enter: the mini pumpkin. The Bilkes found itty-bitty gourds, carved them, filled them with bright flowers, took photos to post online, then delivered them gratis to upscale restaurants and retail shops to brighten front counters.

Bingo! The shop sold “a tremendous amount” of mini pumpkins as décor items and hostess gifts, Bilke said. The response heard over and over: “It's so exciting to see something different!” 🍂

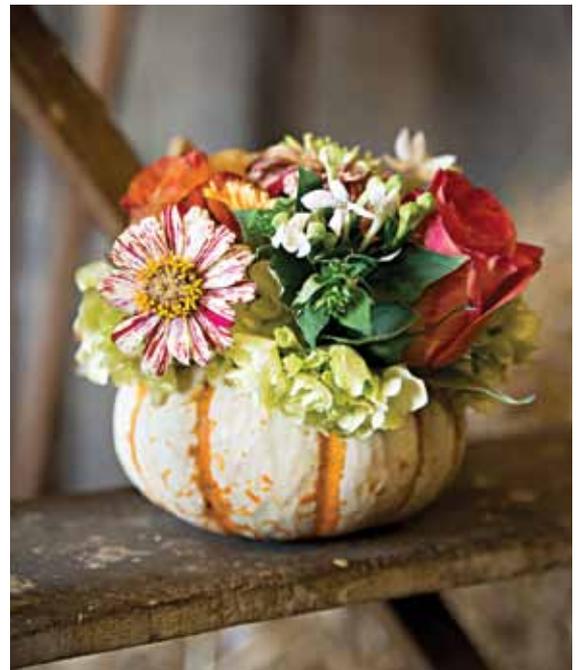
Katie Hendrick
khendrick@gmail.com



ONE SINGULAR SENSATION This design, consisting of a simple pumpkin and one large sunflower, satisfies the customer who wants the “harvest” look with a modern twist, Bilke said. Design time: 5 to 7 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$3.50. Retail price: \$18.50.



CUTE AS A BUTTON “Bright-colored flowers appeal to a youthful demographic,” Bilke said. “We incorporated buttons for customers who love the vintage look.” Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$6.50. Retail price: \$30.



WARM WISHES A variegated fuchsia zinnia adds an unexpected splash of color to a traditional palette of oranges, greens and whites. Design time: 10 to 15 minutes. Wholesale costs: \$8. Retail price: \$35.

PHOTOS BY MARK MOORE OF KAREN MOORE PHOTOGRAPHY AND GRAPHIC DESIGN