

Dahlias, chrysanthemums, sunflowers and roses suit an autumn harvest dinner, especially in warm or muted colors. Pair them with seasonal foliage and keep arrangements low enough for guests to see across the table.

Choose flowers with autumn color

Dahlias bring full, rounded blooms to the table. Look for rust, burgundy, plum, peach or cream. Their varied shapes make an arrangement feel generous without needing many different flowers.

Chrysanthemums are another good choice. They come in many forms, from small button blooms to large, open flowers. Bronze, gold and deep red work well with a harvest palette, while white or pale green can lighten a darker arrangement.

Sunflowers give the table a more casual look. Use a few smaller heads rather than a dense row of large blooms. Roses in peach, copper or dark red can add a softer shape alongside them.

Add foliage and texture

Flowers need a little space around them. Branches of autumn leaves, sprigs of herbs or seed heads can add movement and make a centerpiece look less tightly packed. Choose clean, sturdy material and remove any leaves that would sit below the waterline.

Think about the table as a whole. A few pears, small pumpkins or gourds can echo the harvest theme without being part of the flower arrangement. Place them around the vessels, not in the water, and leave space for serving dishes.

- Use dahlias as the main flowers in a low centerpiece.

- Add chrysanthemums for smaller shapes and contrasting color.
- Try sunflowers for a relaxed table with plenty of room.
- Use roses to soften an arrangement of bold blooms.
- Finish with a little foliage or a few clean seed heads.

Keep the table easy to use

A dinner centerpiece should not block faces or make guests move their plates. Choose a low bowl or several small vases. Set them on the table before adding the food so you can check the space from each seat.

Several small arrangements are useful on a long table. They spread the color along its length and are easy to shift when a platter arrives. Leave clear areas for glasses, napkins and shared dishes.

Be careful with strongly scented flowers at a meal. A subtle fragrance is less likely to compete with the food. Keep flowers and foliage away from candles and open flames.

Prepare the flowers for dinner

Start with clean vessels and fresh water. Trim the stems and remove foliage that would sit in the water. Arrange the largest blooms first, then add smaller flowers and a little foliage to fill the gaps.

Keep the arrangements in a cool spot until it is time to set the table. Check the water before guests arrive, especially in small vases, and top it up if needed. Remove any damaged petals or leaves for a tidy finish.

A handful of well chosen flowers is enough. Let their color bring the season to the table while keeping the meal and conversation at the center.

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