

DECOR

# Guest rooms that feel like home

WASHINGTON POST

WASHINGTON — Whether you offer a private room with a king-size bed, 500-thread-count sheets and WiFi or an inflatable mattress squeezed onto a kitchen floor, it may be in great demand for the holidays.

Getting a request for lodging can be a prompt to replace faded towels and buy a case of Fiji water or perhaps something stronger.

"In many cases, a guest room is likely also a spare room or a gift wrap room and needs attention," says Amy Elliott, author of "A Warm Welcome: How to Be a Gracious Host to Friends and Family," to be published by Ryland Peters & Small in April.

Elliott says it is hospitable to provide computer access, a good reading light, an alarm clock, a selection of clothes hangers and a cozy throw. Bedding is important.

"Even if you are using an **AeroBed** or a sofa, you should have nice sheets and a feather-bed," Elliott says.

At Donna Brazile's house here, two sisters and a friend with a teenage daughter have

reserved beds for the Jan. 20 Inaugural festivities.

"What makes my guest room special? It's cozy, comfy and comes with its own TV," Brazile, a Democratic strategist and commentator, said in an e-mail. "It's also above the kitchen, so the guest knows what is stirring at all times."

Los Angeles designer Barbara Barry believes you should make a guest room feel like a hotel room. First, clear off the bedside table so your guests can make themselves and their personal items at home.

"It is really nice to have new, fresh soap, shampoo and fluffy towels in the bathroom," she said in an e-mail.

Celerie Kemble says a guest room can also be a chance to indulge in some design whimsy, but don't get too carried away.

"Number one, make them feel cozy with down pillows and comforters. Number two, make it beautiful," says the New York decorator, who writes about furnishing a guest room in her new book, "To Your Taste: Creating Modern Rooms With a Traditional Twist" (Clarkson Potter, \$45).

When was the last time you

test-drove the mattress and window shades in your spare room?

"My guest room is really important to me. I sleep in it every few months," says Adam Mahr, owner of the A Mano home accessories shop here. "Because I'm in retail, nobody really wants to be around me before Christmas, but I expect some houseguests to show up afterwards."

The pistachio green guest room in his home offers a queen-size mattress and a duvet covered in an Etro paisley print.

Washington designer Skip Sroka and partner John Kammeier have three guest rooms in their home. "We hosted Thanksgiving and all were filled," Sroka says. "Our house is booked every weekend before Christmas with guests."

Sroka often designs double-duty guest rooms and prefers Murphy beds to sofa beds.

"We have one client who just put a Murphy bed in a room that is their massage room and kids' project room," he says.

But he says a multifunctional guest space should be uncluttered: "Find a way to close off the personal part."