

Elegant table sets framework for successful party

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companion anywhere from two to 50 guests."

Lark suggests after you have established the date, time and number of people coming for dinner, plan the table design and start with the china. She often takes one or two pieces of her dinnerware to shop for fabric or for a ready made tablecloth.

"Once you establish the color scheme it's easy to add the glass-

ware, and other collectibles," she said. You need to be flexible and add or take away accessories as you set the table. Lark doesn't like to set flower arrangements in the center of the table because it so often blocks the view. Instead, she sets floral arrangements in the room close to the dinner table. On many occasions her dinner parties focus around a food theme.

"Once we did a morel party, morels were incorporated into every-

course of the dinner. To carry out the theme, I covered the white tablecloths with Boston ferns and other greenery to get a forest look," she said. And then served everything on glass dishes, so as not to take away from the tablecloth."

NORMA SILK co-owner of Blossoms floral design shops is really in the business of designing tables. With shops in Bloomington, Berkeley, and Grose Pointe he and his partner Dale Morgan are in the midst of de-

veloping a new concept shop, Party Blossoms, which will open in mid-February. They love to coordinate party themes beginning with the invitation, table covers, centerpieces and accessories.

Having spent 12 years working in his family's flower shop and later as a window designer for Jacobson's and Sak's Fifth Avenue, Norman Silk has developed a personal and innovative decorative style. "Everyone knows they can order a floral centerpiece for a dinner table, an approach

should be taken which personalizes and makes a statement when entertaining." The table becomes the focal point in the room, according to Silk, and should have immediate impact when guests walk into the room. "Everything we buy, we buy because we like it."

He suggests looking around your home for unusual flower holders. "The size of the container dictates how many flowers to buy when designing an arrangement and it

should not be so large that guests can't see over it," he added.

Entertaining with style, Martha Stewart says should not be too contrived. She discourages her readers from rushing out and buying a spread of gimmicky tableware and goblets that may be featured in a decorating magazine. She recommends that a table should be "harmonious, buy things that go with your home, that have age or inherent charm or utility not cachet."

Chefs explain how they make food pretty to look at

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"Try replacing the Brussels sprouts with green beans the new potatoes with mashed potatoes. You now have not only a variety of colors, but of shapes. The effect is

pleasing to the eye."

Sometimes culinary arts aren't meant to be eaten, only appreciated as is the case with ice sculptures. In the days before refrigeration, ice sculpture kept food cold, and made it look pretty. Dishes were in-

corporated into the design.

Dan Hugelier, a certified master chef, teaches ice carving, sausage making and butchering at Schoolcraft Community College. His craft requires a lot of planning.

"Chefs like to build things, put things together, but you can't take a chain saw and start hacking away at the ice," said Hugelier.

"You need a knowledge of architecture, you have to sketch your design and work from a blueprint."

Like drawing, painting, sculpting, and writing, most ideas undergo numerous revisions. A chef will often redraw and redefine plans.

"Simplicity and elegance are the keys," said Decker. "Sometimes it's

better to take away. Overly garnished items lose something."

See more tips on food presentation inside.

Carve out time for ice festivals

There are lots of opportunities to enjoy the culinary art of ice carving this month and next.

The Plymouth International Ice Sculpture Spectacular kicks off Wednesday, Jan. 15, and continues through Jan. 20. Ice carving will begin Monday, Jan. 13, in downtown Plymouth.

Learn about cold weather cooking as celebrity chefs cook hearty fare, 1-2 p.m. Jan. 15 to 20 at Sideways, 505 Forest, 953-8312 in downtown Plymouth.

Ice carvers will also be busy at

work at the Birmingham WinterFest Feb. 7-9 in downtown Birmingham. Detroit is presenting WinterFest '92, a 10 day festival celebrating winter activities and ice carving, Jan. 24 through Feb. 2, at the Michigan State Fair Grounds in Detroit.

Farther north, in Frankmunth, Zehnder's is hosting Snow Fest '92, Jan. 30 to Feb. 2. Zehnder's will host over 30 teams of artists who will create snow and ice sculptures in the Zehnder's parking lot in downtown Frankmunth.

Chefs serve up tips for perfect platters

See related story on Taste front.

Here are some tips on plate and platter arrangement from Gerald Chesser's "The Art and Science of Culinary Preparation." (Educational Institute of the American Culinary Federation, \$32. Call (800) 624-9458 for ordering information.)

Keep the food off the rim of the plate. The well of the plate is where the food is meant to be. If there is too much food for the well of the plate, get a larger plate or reduce the amount of food.

Arrange food in unity. Do not have food spread all over the plate. The eye should focus on the center of the plate, not the edge.

Serve sauce under around food. Be careful not to overdo. Sauce is meant to complement and enhance the flavor of food, not hide the flavor.

Variety in platter arrangement is as important as color variation.

Garnish only when necessary. A garnish is only added to a plate or platter for balance and must be functional.

Simplicity is the key. In food presentation, it is more attractive to have a simple plate presentation rather than an overworked, complex one. Elaborate designs often cause confusion.

Think of flavors. To place shrimp in cream sauce on the same plate with sweet-and-sour cabbage creates an unpleasant flavor for the guest. The acid in the cabbage dish curdles the cream in the shrimp as they melt in the mouth.

Serve food at the correct temperature. Serve cold foods on chilled plates, platters and serving dishes.

Use the highest quality, freshest ingredients available," said Joe

Decker, a pastry chef at Schoolcraft Community College in Livonia.

"Don't be afraid to experiment," said Bob Kozak, executive chef at

Fellows Creek Golf Club of Canton. "Try cooking with flavored vinegars. Use dried apricots instead of apples in stuffing."

Venture over to wild side of rice

See taste buds column on Taste front.

CHEDDAR AND WILD RICE
(serves 10)

1 cup sliced mushrooms
3 tablespoons butter/margarine
2 cups cooked wild rice
1 1/2 cups shredded cheddar cheese

Saute mushrooms in butter until softened slightly. Toss with wild rice and cheese. Spoon into a buttered casserole, cover and bake at 325 degrees for 20 minutes. Uncover and bake 10 minutes more.

WILD RICE VEGETABLE DISH
(serves 10)

great, hot or cold)

1/2 cup chopped onion
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 cup chopped green pepper
1/2 pound bacon, chopped
1 can condensed cream of mushroom soup
3 cups cooked wild rice

Saute the onion, celery and green pepper with the bacon. Drain off the excess fat. Add sauteed vegetables and drained bacon to the soup. Stir in the wild rice. Season to taste, if desired. Store in the refrigerator and heat or serve as desired.

WILD RICE STUFFING
(serves 10)

1 1/2 cups cooked wild rice
1 loaf of day old bread, cut into cubes
1/2 of a large onion, chopped
1/2 cup butter
1/2 cup chicken bouillon
1/2 teaspoon salt (optional)
1/2 teaspoon sage
1/2 teaspoon pepper

Saute the onion in half the butter and combine the wild rice and bread cubes. Add remaining butter by teaspoons. Toss to mix. Moisten with warm bouillon, using only as much as needed to wet the dressing ingredients. Season with salt, sage and pepper. Use as a stuffing or turn into a greased casserole and bake at 325 degrees, covered, for 30 minutes.

butter for 5 minutes. Combine soy sauce, sour cream, salt, pepper and almonds. Add the wild rice, beef, onion, mushrooms and celery. Toss lightly. Place in a greased casserole and bake at 350 degrees uncovered for 45 minutes, adding water if necessary to prevent it from drying out.

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