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# Let Us Entertain You...

## SOMETHING EXTRA: HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING

### Perpetual hostesses prescribe painstaking party planning

By LINDA BACHRACK

Some folks seem to throw together parties as easily as they whip up a gourmet meal. Others are at the point of the thought of planning a simple neighborhood barbecue. In the end, the season of merriment, you will probably marvel at the ease and ingenuity with which some festivities are executed.

But don't be fooled. Seasoned party-givers and interior designers know that the holidays are a time when you are all set together are painstakingly planned to appear flawless. That's the key to a successful party — all of the details are brainstormed out days, the food is laid simple or made ahead of time and the door follows a theme. There in the right mix of people, refreshments and the fun begins.

**A hot challenge**  
"The invitation sets the scene," says Cline who cleverly dressed her own invitation. She and husband Bob recently teamed with neighbors, Torrance and Jim Shively, to host a "Chill Cocktail." This would make a great New Year's Day party, says Cline, as she details the planning of her Southwest affair.

The inspiration for the chill challenge came from nature — cold weather calls for a steaming cup of chili. Cline and Shively pooled their creative talents and came up with a striking invitation made from brown kraft paper. It was mounted on a square of black poster board and printed in black and red. A dried chili pepper perched in the corner. The invitation felt so special that this was a real competition, and a hot one at that. Parties were to be awarded.

Cline knew that the party of chili would be the focus, so decorations were kept to a minimum. She scattered big chunky candles and draped the tables in burnt orange, cream and navy blue. And she had her guests fill out their own party favors. The party was filled with hot merriment, perfect buttered jalapeno and tortilla chips with plenty of salsa and guacamole. Plates of frozen margaritas, spiced cider and bottles of beer prepped the party.

"Everyone was asked to sample as many sillas as possible and vote for their favorite by dropping a chili pepper in the bag placed in front of each numbered pot," says Cline. "The votes were tallied and the winner awarded their fitting prize — chili bowls for 15 place sets. Denise Wilson was the winner for the chili chili."

If you're planning a chili feast for the holidays, Cline suggests these decorating tips. "I would use

as paper as tablecloth, tie red ribbons on the baskets and string dried peppers and red chili-pepper lights on the trees. Then I would make huge bouquets of Mexican paper flowers in red, green and white." You might also tie bannamans to tree branches and use raffia to make toppers for your centerpieces.

"Everyone seemed to love the chili," says Cline of her chili cocktail. And you'll be amazed at the variety of dishes and the incredible presentation your friends desire.

**Trim the tree**  
Karen Cline's mother, Dawn Hubbard, puts her party-planning skills to work every year for her regularly scheduled Christmas celebration at her country home in Houston. Always the second Friday in December, the Hubbard party usually has a "red" following.

"Each year Mom and I do a theme for the party and design the invitation accordingly. Included in the invitation is a wooden cut-out ornament that each person decorates. Last year was a stocking and this year is a snowflake. The little red tag around the ornament's neck instructs the recipient to dress him or her for the occasion."

The competition is fierce according to Cline. Everyone wants to win the contest. All of the ornaments are displayed on a wooden tree that Hubbard crafted for the occasion.

"We're decorating around a country Christmas motif for this year," says Cline. She sticks with her traditional paper ideas for the invitation, but adds a little low for some country flavor. The decor will be casual, with everything done in natural fibers and materials — lots of kraft paper, burlap and gauze. She'll probably use some chunky candles and draped the tables in burnt orange, cream and navy blue. And she'll have her guests fill out their own party favors. The party was filled with hot merriment, perfect buttered jalapeno and tortilla chips with plenty of salsa and guacamole. Plates of frozen margaritas, spiced cider and bottles of beer prepped the party.

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Or celebrate the Chinese New Year on our New Year's Eve. Buy fortune cookies, remove the fortunes and replace with your own. The fortune doubles as an invitation, is placed in a little white Chinese take-out container and delivered to your guests. Continue the Oriental theme with paper umbrellas and fans from Five One Imports. Serve Wonton soup and potato buns with chili sauce and vegetables and vegetable and placed on a bed of rice. "This can all be done ahead of time," assures Cline. "You can have it all stomach and make a beautiful presentation."

What's next for the busy hosts on Cline's guest list? "A black tie event party with a Masai Glam atmosphere and a 'make-a-kindness' theme." Sounds daunting at first but the hostess has it.

**Just desserts**  
Renée Leah of Birmingham entertains husband Mike's GM associates every Christmas with a dinner and dessert party. To simplify the planning, Leah hosts the dinner at a nearby center club and receives her guests at her home for dessert and coffee.

The dessert menu always includes her coconut chocolate pie (recipe follows) and bite-size fruit-shaped ice cream molds from Bay's Ice Cream Company in Royal Oak. Her mother will be present in person for her turtle cookies and guests will be treated to Mrs. Esther Price's famous candy from Dayton. In addition, this year Leah plans to serve "Pistache" sublimis chocolate pie.

"I keep the decorations festive," says Leah. "I have a collection of ornamental candles that I use on mirrored placemats." And everyone goes home with a hand-crafted ornament for the tree.

So deck the halls and put away your thinking cap. You too can celebrate a smashing holiday soiree, and with the proper preparation, you'll be the only one who really low spend. What, and tears shed over the planning. Just smile and say, "Oh, I just threw this together."



Party treasurer: Karen Cline's ability to pull off holiday and other parties begins with her closet full of accessories.

### How much to make and order for how many requires some figuring

By KEELY WYCHER

My husband started talking about how he was to visit with a former neighbor of ours. I was so excited that I had to tell my mother-in-law. She was so excited that she had to tell her husband. I was so excited that I had to tell my mother-in-law. She was so excited that she had to tell her husband. I was so excited that I had to tell my mother-in-law. She was so excited that she had to tell her husband.

Over the years, the Antilles have learned a few things about planning parties. "I'll tell you what I have on hand, get out all the wedding gifts you haven't used. Maximize your space, move furniture out of rooms and rent small tables to seat people. Once we moved all our furniture to the garage and covered it up."

"Once we had a party for 80 people and I spent most of my time in the kitchen setting dishes and heating things up. After-

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