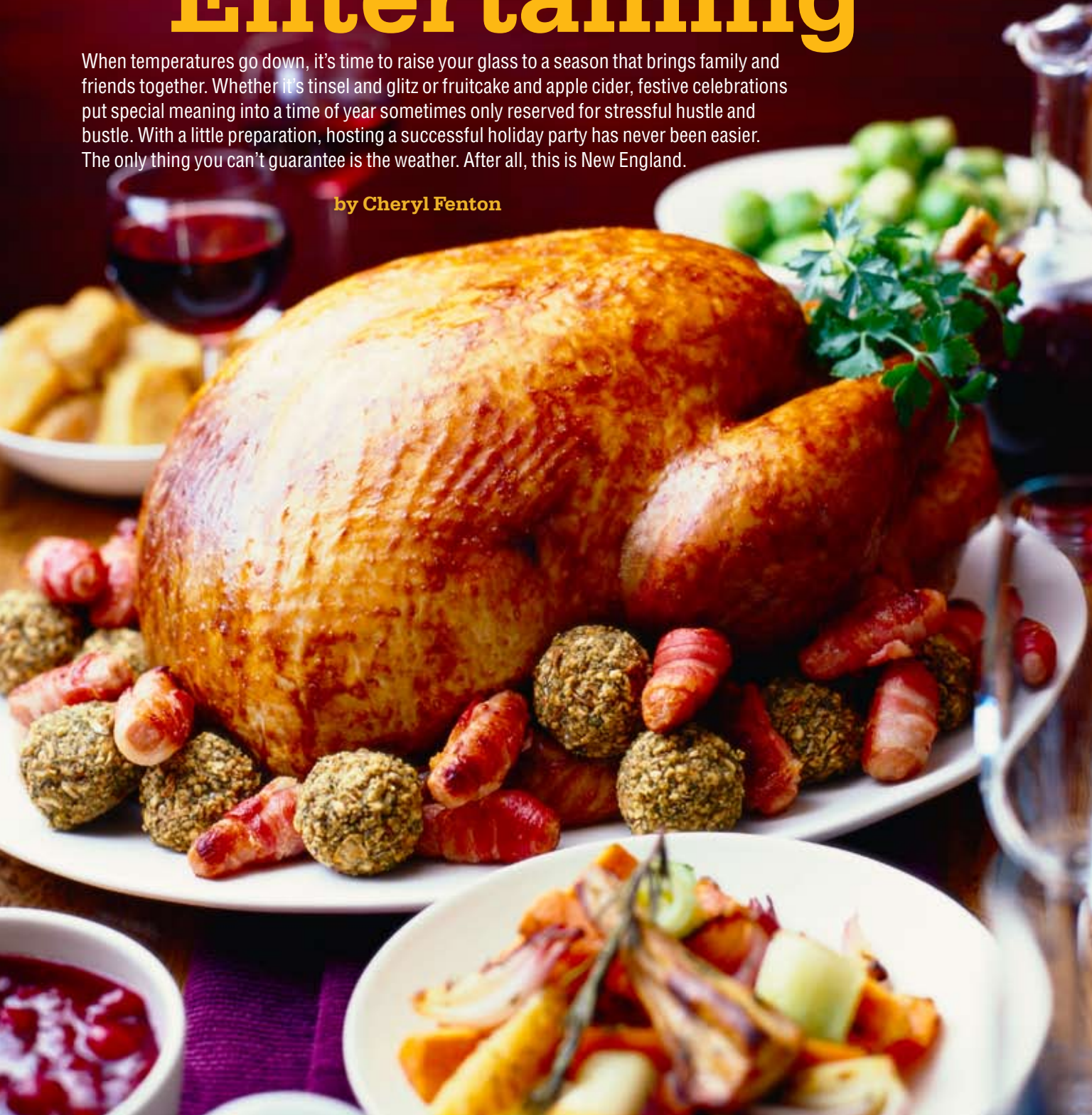


GUIDE TO HOLIDAY

Entertaining

When temperatures go down, it's time to raise your glass to a season that brings family and friends together. Whether it's tinsel and glitz or fruitcake and apple cider, festive celebrations put special meaning into a time of year sometimes only reserved for stressful hustle and bustle. With a little preparation, hosting a successful holiday party has never been easier. The only thing you can't guarantee is the weather. After all, this is New England.

by Cheryl Fenton



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LONGWOOD EVENTS
SOUTHOUE VENUES

TOPPER'S
BAYVIEW DINING AT THE WAUWATON

Restaurant Associates

The
FRETZ
Kitchen

Spread a little holiday cheer with these entertaining tips and tricks from area experts. From how to prepare beforehand to stocking the bar to actually enjoying a cocktail yourself, they prove it's possible to entertain without going insane.

Perfect Planning

Your first decision as host is whom you'll be hosting. You might want just a few close friends or you might want everyone. Whether you choose an intimate sit-down dinner of several courses or an all-out cocktail reception with passed trays of tiny gourmet delights, there are a few things to consider.

"Always do something that's within reach. How comfortable do you feel cooking for six versus 10?" asks Daniel Bruce, chef for the Boston Harbor Hotel. "Six to eight people is what most people would be comfortable with before changing to a cocktail reception from a sit-down dinner." Also, consider whether the group you invite works well together. The dynamic of your company can sometimes dictate the flow of the evening.

What's more, it's important to understand your limitations . . . literally. "You're capped at the size of your table and the number of plates you have," Chef Bruce says. "You have to have enough plates for the number of courses you'll be serving because you don't want to be in the kitchen washing dishes during the party."

Roasted Harvest Vegetable-Filled Baby Pumpkins

Chef Daniel Bruce, Boston Harbor Hotel

Ingredients:

5 baby pumpkins	3/4 cup peeled pearl onions
3/4 cup peeled carrots	3/4 cup washed kale
3/4 cup peeled butternut squash	1 1/2 Tbl olive oil
3/4 cup peeled rutabaga	Salt and pepper to taste

Preparation:

1. Preheat oven to 350°F.
2. Wash, lightly oil, and season pumpkins. Place onto cookie sheet and bake for 20 minutes until tender.
3. Remove pumpkins, cool, and remove top by carving jackolantern style.
4. Remove seeds, and reserve both cleaned pumpkin and top.
5. Dice all vegetables into one-inch pieces.
6. Place all vegetables except kale into a bowl, toss together with olive oil, and season to taste.
7. Bake on a non-stick cookie sheet at 350°F for 20 minutes until tender.
8. Rough chop kale and place into bowl.
9. Remove vegetables and toss with kale, cover with plastic wrap, and let set for five minutes.
10. Place vegetable mix into pumpkins.
11. Heat in oven for ten minutes prior to serving.

Apple Tart Tatin

Pastry Chef Jennifer Hooper, TOPPER'S at The Wauwinet

Makes 6 Mini Tarts

STEP 1:

Preparation of Cinnamon Foam:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of milk
- 1 cup of 2% milk
- 1 cap lecithin (this can be found at health food stores)
- Pinch of cinnamon
- Splash of vanilla extract
- 1 Tbl butter

1. Combine ingredients in small saucepan. Heat to scald.
2. Using hand blender, skim surface to create foam.

Cinnamon foam can be made ahead of time. Heat again and bring to foam with hand blender prior to serving.

STEP 2:

Preparation of Cinnamon Whipped Cream:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of heavy cream
- 1 cup of granulated sugar
- 1 tsp of vanilla extract
- 1 tsp of cinnamon

1. Combine ingredients.
2. Whip to medium peak.

Cinnamon whipped cream can be made up to one day ahead of time and stored in the refrigerator.

STEP 3:

Preparation of Caramel Sauce:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of granulated sugar
- 1 cup of heavy cream

1. Bring sugar to medium brown caramel color.
2. Whisk in cream.

This can be kept at room temperature prior to service.

Preparation of Caramel:

Ingredients:

- 2 cups of granulated sugar
- 1 cup of water

1. Bring sugar to medium brown caramel color.
2. Whisk in water.

Caramel must be made and poured into the molds while soft, otherwise it will be difficult.

STEP 4: Preparing Tarts

Ingredients:

- 1 puff pastry sheet (can be frozen bought from store)
- 4 Granny Smith apples
- Six Small 4" baking molds (3/4" deep, round)

1. Use baking molds to cut six perfect puff pastry rounds needed for the final assembly method.
2. Peel apples, cut them in half from the stem down, core, and thinly slice using a Mandoline. If you are preparing apples ahead of time, submerge the thin slices in water and lemon juice to prevent browning.
3. Line the bottoms of molds with caramel. This step can be completed ahead of time and the molds stored in the refrigerator.
4. Top each with approximately six thinly sliced, peeled Granny Smith apples. Fan the slices out for presentation.
5. Top each of the molds with a puff pastry round.
6. Bake 10 to 15 minutes at 375°F.
7. Remove the molds from the oven.
8. Let rest for 10 minutes.
9. Turn the mini tarts out of the molds, so the caramel is now on top.

Note: You can prepare this dessert until this point prior to dinner so that you can simply assemble the rest right before service.

STEP 5:

Plating the Apple Tart Tatin:

1. Place six plates on your work area.
2. Pour caramel sauce onto each plate, creating a backdrop for the tarts to sit on.
3. Add a Tbl of the cinnamon whipped cream on top of each tart.
4. Add a tsp of the cinnamon foam on top of the whipped cream on each tart.
5. Serve immediately.

Chef David Daniels at TOPPER'S Restaurant at The Wauwinet in Nantucket agrees, reminding you to ask yourself, "How many people can you comfortably accommodate for each type of party? If you're planning to invite a lot of people, perhaps it's a much better plan to do heavy hors d'oeuvres versus a sit-down dinner. A more intimate group would be much better suited with a sit-down dinner party."

Take Care to Prepare

Regardless of its scale, there's no time like the present (or at least the day before) to start preparing for your holiday feast. A little prep work can go a long way toward more Yuletide joy.

Decorative Holiday Ravioli®

Chef Roberta L. Dowling, The Cambridge School of Culinary Arts

Yields: 8-12 raviolis; serve one per person as an appetizer.



STEP 1:

Preparation of Pasta Dough:

Ingredients:

- 3 cups of flour
- 1 tsp of salt
- 4 eggs
- 2 Tbl of olive oil (optional)

1. Combine the flour and salt and place in a mound on a work surface.
2. Make a well in the center of mixture and add the eggs and olive oil, if using.
3. Beat the eggs with a fork until well mixed.
4. Gradually begin incorporating the flour into the egg mixture with your fork.
5. When enough of the flour has been incorporated so that the dough can be worked by hand, begin kneading the dough, adding more flour to prevent the dough from becoming too sticky.
6. Knead vigorously about 10 minutes until dough is smooth and satiny to the touch, and when cut in two is completely smooth, with no air holes or gluten strands visible.
7. Wrap the dough with plastic and allow it to rest 30 minutes in order to relax the gluten.

STEP 2:

Coloring of Pasta Dough:

1. To color your pasta dough, whisk three to four Tbl of vegetable purees into your egg mixture before adding it to the well of flour. You may also use baby food or a small amount of vegetable dye.
2. To compensate for extra moistness, you may incorporate extra flour into the dough while kneading.

STEP 3:

Preparation of Lobster and Mascarpone Filling:

Ingredients:

- 1/2 lb lobster meat, cooked
- 1/2 Tbl of unsalted butter
- 1/2 Tbl of extra virgin olive oil
- 1 shallot, finely chopped
- 1/2 cup of Sauvignon Blanc
- 8 oz block of Mascarpone cheese
- 1 egg, beaten
- 1 Tbl of chopped basil
- Salt and pepper to taste
- Pinch of nutmeg, freshly grated

1. Pick over and chop lobster meat. Set aside.
2. Heat butter and extra virgin olive oil in a sauté pan.
3. Sweat shallots until soft and translucent.
4. Add Sauvignon Blanc and cook until reduced to syrup-like consistency.
5. Add lobster meat until just warmed through. Remove from heat and place into a mixing bowl.
6. Combine Mascarpone cheese with the two eggs, chopped basil, and seasonings.
7. Add to lobster and shallot mixture and combine well. Taste to adjust seasoning.

STEP 4:

Preparation of Pasta:

1. Using a pasta roller, roll out pasta into thin sheets (about 1/16").
2. Cut out shapes in the pasta for the tops and bottoms of the ravioli using cookie cutters (bells, snowmen, trees, gingerbread boys and girls, snowflakes, stars, wreaths, menorahs, etc.)
3. Place pasta shapes in a floured dishtowel and cover so that pasta does not dry out.
4. Cut out smaller shapes to decorate ravioli.
5. Using a small paintbrush dipped in egg white, "glue" decorations onto ravioli. Be sure to completely decorate the top layer before filling.
6. Cover with a floured dishtowel.

Filling the Ravioli:

1. On the bottom layer of ravioli, place a spoonful of filling.
2. Using a paintbrush, brush egg white all over the pasta, up to and around the filling.
3. Place the top layer of pasta on top of the filling, pressing to seal, pinching the edges together with a fork.
4. Cover, until all of the ravioli shapes are made.

Cooking the Ravioli:

1. Bring a shallow skillet of salted water to boil.
2. Carefully slide in ravioli until submerged. Reduce heat to a simmer for approximately 8-10 minutes.
3. Remove ravioli with a slotted spoon and lay on paper towels to absorb excess water.
4. Place ravioli on plates and spoon on truffle butter sauce.

STEP 5:

Preparation of thee Burro di Tartufo (Truffle Butter) Sauce:

Ingredients:

- 1 lb unsalted butter or a drizzle of white truffle oil
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 jar of truffles, black or white, finely chopped (optional)
- Pinch of salt

1. Cream the butter with the salt with an electric mixer until smooth and creamy.
2. Beat in the chopped truffles.
3. Refrigerate a minimum of five hours or preferably overnight.
4. Heat the butter in a medium-sized saucepot until just melted and warm. Do not let boil.
5. Serve each ravioli with a drizzle of truffle butter. If made a day ahead of time, refrigerate until ready to use. Bring to room temperature before using.

Roberta Dowling, director and owner of the Cambridge School of Culinary Arts, suggests deciding if there will be a theme. "Will it be a country, like an Italian or Greek Christmas? Will it be black tie?" she asks. "It's important to start off with a plan, then begin to put your vision together as if it were a picture."

Once you know if it's a formal affair with your finest linen or a casual get-together with jingle bells and party hats, start getting it together.

"Find a corner in your house, and start pulling linens and decorations and put them into that one place," says Dowling. "Then, the day of the party, you aren't running around looking for things." At the very least, she suggests writing lists for what you're going to do and where things are located.

Reserve the day before for grocery shopping. Then make friends with your fridge. The morning of the party, do as much as possible and pack your refrigerator until you're ready to heat everything up for the main event. Think of presearing or premarketing your meat or fish; blanching your veggies. Even sauces can be prepared in advance. If the sauce is one that won't have a good shelf life, such as a heavy butter sauce, prepare it closer to guests' arrival time, and store it above your stove for constant warmth.

"Soups are also wonderful to prepare ahead of time," adds Daniels. "All you need to do on the day of the party is add some finishing touches, heat, and serve. The purpose of the party is to spend time with your guests, not in the kitchen."

Preparing ahead of time ensures you aren't slaving over the hot stove while your guests are arriving in from the cold; you'll just be doing what Bruce terms "show cooking."

"Nothing really big should be happening to take your time away from your guests," says Bruce. "I usually like to have all my ingredients ready at this point and in the appropriate pans. Have all your hot food ready on cookie sheets and an oven pre-

heated. Then, when you're ready, just heat them up."

"Do anything you can without hurting the integrity of the food," he continues. "The idea is to have as much done as possible without sacrificing quality. All cutting and cleaning needs to be done, so that your kitchen looks organized when your guests walk in. Having some ingredients prepared and in glass bowls lined up is also very impressive to your company."

You also shouldn't be darting from kitchen to party and back again. Think about having food stations for a cocktail party or, as Daniels suggests, enrolling help in the kitchen: maybe the teenage son or daughter of a friend who wants to earn a little extra money cleaning up while the party is going on. For larger parties, hire one or two waiters—an expense well worth it.

Food for Thought

With the holiday season in full swing, it's important to serve up heartier foods to take the chill off winter winds. There are many seasonal New England fares at your disposal.

"For dinners, I like dishes that require very few pots," says Bruce. "In New England, it's traditional to do 'one-pot dishes,' like stews, ragouts, fricassees, especially in the winter. Generally these dishes are slow cooked and have great aromas." When it's a smaller cocktail party, display different spreads, dips served with baked slivers of flavored breads, marinated pitted olives, and easy-to-eat items such as shrimp or other regional seafood on skewers, and precracked lobster claws.

If cooking isn't your cup of tea, try the simple route of a deli platter. Gone are the days of sliced American cheese, ham, and turkey. Today's platters are more elegant than ever.

Dietz & Watson has been serving up fine meats and gourmet cheeses for 39 years. Walter Staib, consulting chef for

Dietz & Watson, suggests serving heartier selections during the winter months. Cheeses like smoked gouda or cheddars with garlic, jalapeno, or horseradish love this time of year, and look a little close to home with something as scrumptious as Vermont brown bread, smeared with a dab of horseradish.

"You should also play around with the meats," says Staib. "Try prosciutto, Genoa salami, pepperoni stick, Black Forest Ham, or black pepper turkey breast. These are still deli items but not your run-of-the-mill."

For adding a little warmth to your occasion, try Dietz & Watson's heated mini-paninis—easily assembled silver dollar-sized sandwiches with salami, prosciutto, and pizza fillers are available. "Make them ahead of time, and put them in your fridge. People come, you pop them in the oven, the cheese melts, and you're in business," he laughs.

Don't forget the special touches. Even the most amazing dish served on a paper plate won't seem as amazing. Delight your guests with creative explorations of presentation, so every turn of the corner is a little bit of a surprise, no matter the menu.

"When you entertain, people eat with the eye," explains Staib. "The beauty of the items is just as important as what you put on your platter. The way you display it gets people excited and takes it over the top."

Add a little color with kumquats on the vine or dwarf fruits like lady apples or mini pears, or by placing cheese sticks in a tall vase on the tray, creating a 3-D look of color, height, and texture that, according to Staib, makes things even more special.

Bar None

A celebration isn't complete without a festive drink—be it a glass of champagne, a warm mug of mulled wine, or a signature concoction that just bubbles with fun.

The Horseradish Angus Sandwich

Dietz & Watson®



Ingredients:

- 2 slices whole or 7-grain bread
- 1 tsp Dietz & Watson® Sandwich Spread
- 1 tsp Dietz & Watson® Horseradish Sauce
- 4 half slices red onion
- 1 Dietz & Watson® Whole Kosher Dill Pickle, finely julienned
- 1 tsp Dietz & Watson® prepared horseradish
- Pinch of freshly ground black pepper
- Pinch of crushed red pepper flakes (optional)
- 5 oz Dietz & Watson® Angus Roast Beef, shaved
- 3 oz Dietz & Watson® NY State Cheddar Cheese with Horseradish, thinly sliced
- Dietz & Watson® Potato Salad, for serving

Preparation:

1. Toast bread.
2. Spread each slice of bread with half of the sandwich spread and half of the horseradish sauce.
3. In a small mixing bowl, gently toss together the onion, pickle, prepared horseradish, black pepper, pepper flakes, and roast beef.
4. Pile mixture onto each slice of bread, and top with slices of cheddar cheese.
5. Place in oven set at 350°F for five to six minutes, until cheese is melted.
6. Serve open faced with potato salad.

When stocking your bar, always keep the basics on hand—vodka, rum, gin, soda, water, tonic, lime, lemon, and ice. Lots of ice. For wines, choose two whites (either a fruity sauvignon blanc or riesling and a fuller bodied chardonnay) and two reds (a softer malbec or merlot and a more robust cabernet or zinfandel).

Bring a little more cheer with a holiday theme drink, suggests Dowling. She speaks of a Snowy Cosmopolitan—a concoction of citrus vodka, triple sec, white cranberry juice, and a splash of lime. To make it even more magical, slice a star fruit. Soak the slices in pomegranate juice for a dazzling red shade, then float one in each drink. A tinge of red passion liquor in a glass of champagne is another attractive and light cocktail sure to please.

Chef Neil Hudson of Brant Point Grill at Nantucket's White Elephant Hotel suggests prepping by cutting all your garnishes such as lemon, limes, and oranges ahead of time.

"Always use glass if possible. A great drink in a plastic cup always fails," he adds. "Again, hire help, a bartender, or designate a best friend to help with the drinks. Most important, make sure that you have a few cocktails yourself!"

Having a Good Time

This is your party. Have fun if you want to. Sometimes easier said than done, with guests to worry about (are they having fun?), food to prepare (will I run out of Brie?) and plates to clear (what a mess!). Clearly, there isn't any time to relax. Or is there?

"Take at least 20 minutes of downtime before your guests arrive so you can unwind, take a breath," says Bruce. "Enjoy a half glass of wine with your spouse, so you both are in a good mindset when your guests arrive."

To really take the pressure off, leave the cooking to someone else by planning to take the party elsewhere. Longwood Events is known as the premier full-service event planning and management company in New England.

Unlike a traditional hotel or caterer, Longwood Events offers venues with distinctive personalities, exquisite cuisine, and complete planning assistance for everything you need for your event—photography, flowers, linens, and event design. This is where Elizabeth Samia, Longwood's event designer, comes into play.

"To ensure that your guests will be fully enveloped in the theme, I use a simple checklist . . . the five senses," explains Samia, on throwing the perfect holiday event. "If you incorporate your theme into the taste, smell, look, sound, and feel of the event, you've guaranteed success."

Duet of Seabass with Wild Mushroom Fricassee and Citrus and Cinnamon Dusted Sea Scallops with Black Truffles

Chef Robert Smith, Longwood Events



Main Ingredients:

- 4 oz fillet of sea bass
- 2 large (u-10) sea scallops

STEP 1:

Preparation of seafood:

1. Clean fish and pat dry.
2. Season with salt and freshly ground pepper.
3. Dust scallops with seasoning.

Scallop seasoning:

- 1 Tbl cinnamon
- Fine zest of one lemon and one orange
- 1/8 tsp of ground pink peppercorns

STEP 2:

Preparation of Wild Mushroom Fricassee:

- 3 ounces assorted wild mushrooms, sliced
- 2 rib celery, peeled and small diced
- 1tsp minced shallots
- 1 clove minced garlic
- 1 tsp chopped parsley and thyme
- 1Tbl olive oil
- 1 tsp butter

1. Sauté mushrooms in olive oil. When they start to give up their juices, add celery, shallots, garlic, and butter.
2. Cook until shallots are translucent, then add herbs, and check for flavor.
3. Keep warm.

STEP 3:

Preparation of Black Truffles:

- 1 fresh black truffle, thinly sliced in rounds

1. Warm in 1 Tbl whole butter
2. Add in one drop of good Cognac



STEP 4:

Cooking of seafood:

1. Over medium heat, sear the sea bass in one Tbl olive oil until it develops a golden crust.
2. Flip fish onto other side.
3. Add 1 Tbl whole butter and when it begins to foam, add scallops to pan.
4. Cook for two minutes until fragrant.
5. Turn over and place pan in preheated 375°F oven.
6. Roast for three minutes.
7. Serve with roasted cherry tomato risotto and sautéed Swiss chard and a brown butter sauce.

BROWN BUTTER SAUCE

- 3 Tbl of whole butter
- 1 lemon (juiced)
- 2 Tbl of balsamic vinegar
- 1/2 cup fish or chicken stock
- 1 Tbl whole butter

1. Over high heat in a heavy bottom pot, cook butter until it foams and begins to turn brown and smells like hazelnuts.
2. Add lemon juice and balsamic vinegar.
3. Reduce one minute.
4. Add stock and reduce by one-third.
5. Whisk in whole butter, check seasoning, and keep warm.

To plate dish:

1. Spoon the fish and scallops into the center of a prepared risotto.
2. On one side, place the bass, topped with two Tbl of the mushroom fricassee.
3. On the other side place two scallops, topped with black truffle coins.
4. Garnish with the chard and a drizzle of the brown butter sauce.

No matter your theme, mood, or guest list, there's a Longwood Events property sure to make your party perfect. The State Room, Longwood Events flagship property located atop 60 State Street in downtown Boston, epitomizes city living; while Veronique is a more romantic venue—a fairy-tale setting in the Tudor castle of Brookline's Longwood Tower complex. Should you want to send the party packing to a little winter wonderland, try a little seaside glamour at Belle Mer, Longwood Event's newest property on Goat Island in Newport, RI.

No matter how ornate the party, the main theme behind any holiday get-together should be simple—the deeper meaning of being with family and loved ones. Anything else is just icing on the cake.

Watch

The Fretz Kitchen—On the Road with Boston magazine
On Comcast's CN8 at 5:00 p.m.
November 7, 9, 14, 16, 21, 23, 28, and 30, and December 5, 7, 12, 14, 19, 21, and 26 for more spectacular recipes and holiday entertaining tips from these great chefs.