On The Homefront

Each week a different business-person, artisan or professional who lives or works in Lansing will share some aspect about his or her occupation that may be useful to Lansing residents. Interested in sharing your skills? Call us at 533-7963.

Elegant Do-It-Yourself Catering

By Sherry Rosemann

Home for the Holidays! Chestnuts roasting! Walks in the snowy woods! Holidays feasts! These conjure up convivial images of family and friends, warmth and good cheer, and, if you are the host and hostess, a lot of work!

Hark, ye of little faith and time! Your holiday festivities need not spell drudgery and gloom. Certainly the days of the housewife working busily and happily for a week preparing pies and yams, plum puddings, and succulent fowl and the like, have altered for many families with working moms (and grandmoms), single parent families, etc. However, it is still possible to host the family celebration, and enjoy yourself, given the proper advance planning and preparation.

Before becoming professional hosts at the Rose Inn, Charles and I use to entertain lavishly for family and friends alike. I would cook for days, impressing everyone with my considerable repertoire of delectables. At the end of the party, we were faced with the mess to clean up, working well into the night sometimes to put things back in order. The next day was a wipe out - necessarily a day of well deserved rest.

We are older and wiser now, and I doubt very much that we would have the stamina to accomplish such feasts any more, even if we wanted to. But we still love to host those wonderful gatherings. With time being the valuable commodity that it is, one just has to smarter and more efficiently. So I offer you, dear readers, the following secrets of entertaining, some keys to success, with the hopes that you may entertain and enjoy your own party!

◆ Planning ahead is essential. When planning the menu, keep it simple. You may have three vegetable dishes that you and your family just love, but one (maybe two, if you are really ambitious) will do just fine. The same holds true for the rest of your menu; i.e., simple hors d'oeuvres, a salad, one meat, one dessert. Of course, when you limit the items, each offering must be absolutely fabulous!

◆ The next consideration in planning the menu is to choose things that can be shopped for and prepared well in advance. A thorough grocery list is a must, unless you enjoy running out at the last minute to pick up the one item you forgot.

◆ Prepare a time line and make the dinner in advance. By preparing for your feast a little at a time you can work at your own pace as you have the time. The added benefit is that the clean-up is done incrementally, so by the time that you have your party, you will have forgotten that you ever made the mess!

◆ Once the food has been prepared and stored for the big day, the table setting should be planned. Consider what your needs will be based on the menu, and if possible, set up a day or two in advance. This gives you the opportunity to iron the table cloth and to polish the silver pieces that haven't been used since the last holiday.

Center pieces with poinsettia and seasonal greens last for days, or make a more elaborate arrangement with cut flowers by using a base of evergreens in oasis with pine cones, statis and/or eucalyptus sprayed gold. Roses and lilies can be added the day of the party to ensure freshness.

So, what are we having at the Rose Inn for Christmas eve dinner and when do we prepare for the masses?

Rose Inn Christmas Eve Dinner

*

Cocktails and Champagne served with spiced pecans (made one month ahead and stored in a tin) and an assortment of fine cheeses

*

Sherried cream of chestnut soup (keeps for 5-6 days)

*

Mesclun greens with Gorgonzola cheese raspberry vinaigrette (keeps for 2 weeks)

*

Choice of stuffed roast goose (prepared 3 days ahead or may be made 3 weeks ahead and frozen)

or

Chateaubriand grilled over charcoal (have the butcher trim it for you and marinate for 24 hours)

*

Butternut squash (made 1 week ahead)
Broccoli soufflé (made 3 days ahead)
Wild rice with pepper medley

*

Cranberry relish (made 1 to 2 weeks ahead)

*

Choice of desserts:
Chocolate and pumpkin mousse
Tangerine sorbet with fresh berries
Pears poached in port wine, with creme anglaise and candied ginger
(Desserts are all made in advance, and assembled as ordered.)

Bon appetit and warm seasons greeting from the Rose Inn.

Sherry and Charles Rosemann operate Lansing's Rose Inn, New York's only four star,and 4 diamond country inn.

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