

EMAIL PRINT DELICIOUS DIGG YAHOO! FEED

Life of the Party

BY ELIZABETH DEHN



PHOTO BY DAVID J. TURNER

Molly Herrmann is the Tastebud Tart, a chick with an unbridled passion for food. The Minneapolis-based personal chef and caterer recently released two CDs: *Tastebud Classic Cocktail Party* and *Tastebud Dinner Party for 12*. The clever discs are filled with simple gourmet recipes, smart tips, and handy shopping lists. Here, Herrmann dishes out some of her favorite tricks for throwing any party with ease.

- A relaxed host makes for a relaxed party. A glass of wine before the guests arrive helps, too!
- Too many choices at a cocktail party can overwhelm the host and the guests. Stick with one or two specialty drinks or classic cocktails, plus beer and wine.
- A cocktail party is for nibbles and libations—not dinner! Don't feel like you have to feed your guests a full meal. Four to six pieces per person, per hour

is a good rule of thumb. Likewise, don't plan your cocktail party at the dinner hour.

- Serve only finger food at a cocktail party. People need to be able to hold their plate and a drink. Utensils can complicate things.
- Fill in the menu with olives and nuts. They're great little bites. They're inexpensive, and all you have to do is dump them into bowls.
- When you're hosting a dinner party, consider serving pork or beef tenderloin. They're special, won't break the bank, and they go a long way.
- Offer a drink and a small bite when guests arrive. It sets the tone, encourages people to mingle, and allows you to escape into the kitchen for any finishing touches.
- Let guests help you. They really, really want to! It takes the pressure off of you and makes them feel more welcome and useful.
- Shake up a dinner party: Serve a family favorite instead of a fancy dish, offer a salad at the end of the meal, or serve food family-style instead of plating it in the kitchen.
- Don't be afraid to cheat! Store-bought items can be real time savers. Purchase ready-made cheeses or cured meats for platters, biscotti, and olive tapenade.
- Be willing to make mistakes and laugh at them. My friends are still talking about a dinner I prepared with too much cayenne. Rarely, however, does anyone talk about the perfect dish after it's been consumed.

Tastebud Classic Cocktail Party and Dinner Party for 12 CDs are available at redstamp.com. Learn more about Molly's personal chef and catering services at tastebudtart.com



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