

HOLIDAY

# Dinner Parties

FOR THE WINE LOVER

## CELEBRATIONS THAT MARRY GREAT WINE, FOOD AND A SENSE OF FUN



BY MIKE DeSIMONE & JEFF JENSSEN  
PHOTOS KATE SEARS • PROPPING PJ MEHAFFEY

The holidays are the ideal time to bring friends and family together and share the love of memorable wine and food in a manner that speaks to your own unique tastes. Focusing on a theme keeps you on track while selecting recipes, drinks, décor, dinnerware and music—all components that turn an ordinary dinner into an extraordinary evening.

Consider your personal sense of style and items you already own when choosing a party theme. Are you cutting-edge and contemporary, artsy and eclectic, or nurturing and nostalgic?

If your dishes look like they belong in the Museum of Modern Art and you're always first in line at the Apple Store, then Merrily Modern is the theme for you.

If the breezy style of San Francisco circa the 1960s and the modern organic food movement is your thing, you're more of the Boho Holidays type.

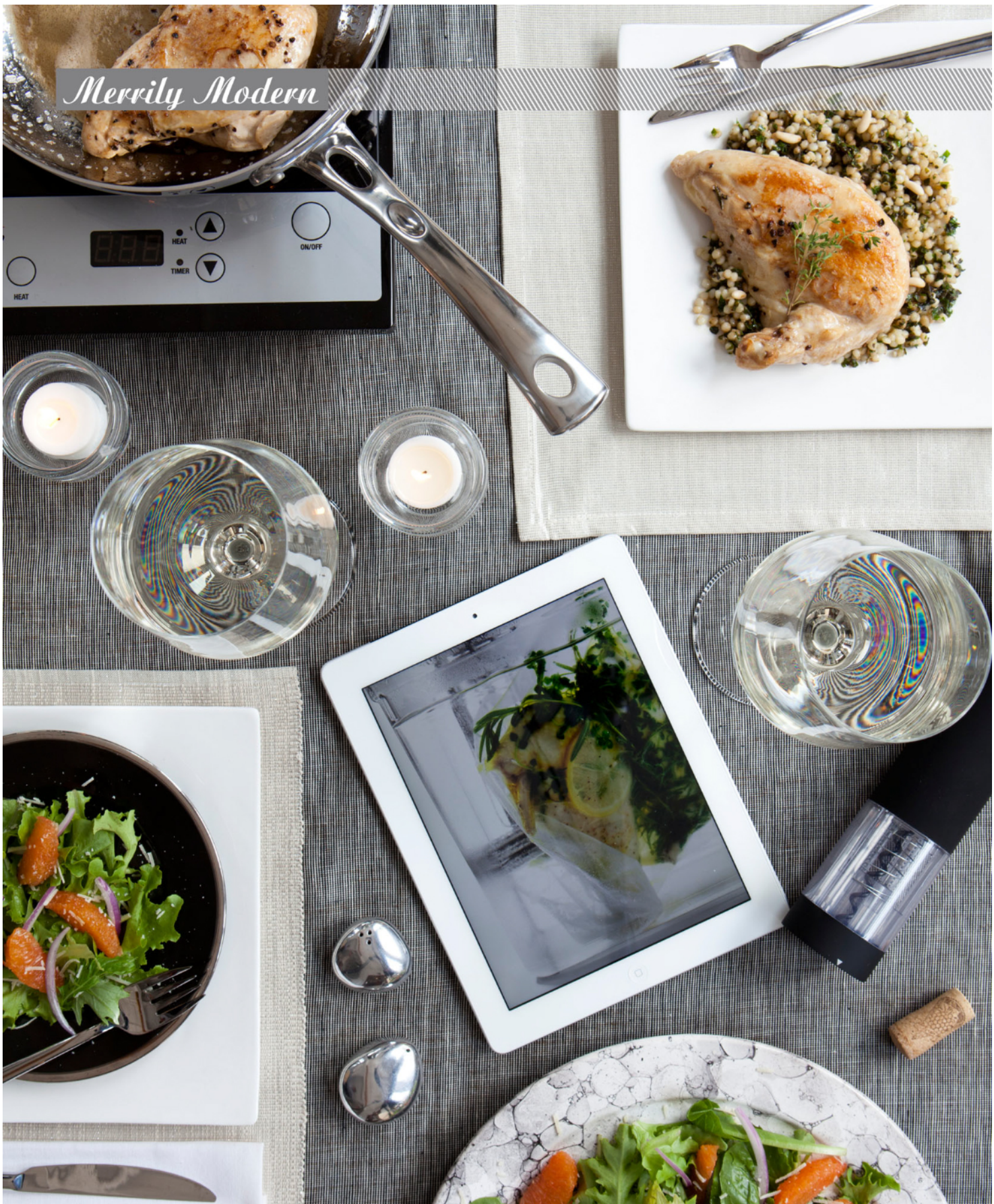
If you believe that stress relief is best found in a warm casserole or a bubbling pot of stew, then you'll relish the Rattle Those Pots and Pans theme.

Whatever the choice, each of these parties will set your celebration apart.





*Merrily Modern*





It's hard to keep the conversation flowing if everybody's absorbed by his or her smartphone, so load the table up with gadgets of your own for a high-tech holiday.

Strategically placed tablets (i.e., iPad, Kindle Fire HD, etc.) can host a slideshow of a wine region or videos of you prepping dinner. Deconstructed or molecular cuisine will shine on plates with clean, modern lines.

Finishing a dish tableside on an induction burner is the height of state-of-the-art home cooking. Electric corkscrews, pepper mills and cheese graters will keep idle hands busy until it's time to post a picture of the pie on Pinterest.

## Menu

Molecular gastronomy for the home cook can be easier than you might think. *Tyler Florence Fresh\** (Clarkson Potter in 2012) breaks down dishes by main ingredient and offers instructional techniques for making “pearls” and cooking *sous vide*. *Modernist Cuisine at Home\*\** (The Cooking Lab, 2012), by Nathan Myhrvold and Maxime Bilet, offers perhaps the definitive text on technical cooking at home. It's packed with practical advice and fashionable recipes that you can create in your own kitchen.



White Cheddar Gougère\*  
Tossed Green Salad  
Shaved Baby Carrots, Rose  
Yogurt, Fenugreek,  
Pomegranate and Mint\*  
Organic Chicken, Israeli

Couscous and Basil Broth\*  
Pressure-Cooked *Paella  
del Bosco\*\**  
Pistachio Gelato\*\*  
Sous-Vide Lemon Curd\*\*

## Off The Menu

**SHAVED BABY CARROTS, ROSE  
YOGURT, FENUGREEK,  
POMEGRANATE AND MINT**

Recipe adapted from *Tyler Florence Fresh*  
(Rodale Books, 2013) by Tyler Florence

**1 cup plain 2% Greek yogurt**  
**1 tablespoon orange  
blossom honey**  
**1 tablespoon rose water**  
**1 teaspoon fresh lemon juice**  
**½ teaspoon ground fenugreek,  
plus more to taste**  
**Kosher salt, to taste**  
**6 red, yellow, and/or orange  
carrots, peeled and sliced  
into long, thin strips using a  
mandolin**  
**2 tablespoons crushed, lightly  
toasted pistachios**  
**2 tablespoons fresh mint leaves**

**¼ cup organic rose petals,  
for garnish**  
**¼ cup micro cilantro, for garnish**  
**Pomegranate gel pearls, for gar-  
nish (recipe available online at  
[winemag.com/holidaydining](http://winemag.com/holidaydining))**

In a blender, combine the yogurt, honey, rose water, lemon juice, fenugreek and salt. Blend until a layer of foam rises to the top.

Place the carrot strips in a large bowl of ice water, allowing them to crisp and curl up.

Drain the carrots and serve on a plate with the pistachios, mint leaves and a sprinkle of fenugreek. Drizzle with the rose yogurt foam, and garnish with the rose petals, cilantro and pomegranate gel pearls. *Serves 4.*

## Décor

Keep your colors simple and streamlined: white, black and silver are all you need. For dishes, glasses and flatware, look for squared-off edges and contemporary shapes with minimal adornment. Go for a gray or silver tablecloth, or metallic placemats and stainless steel chargers. Use small glass or chrome objects as decorations. If tabletop flowers are a must, consider an orchid in a shiny pot or a single stem in a test tube or beaker. Set aside time at the start of each course to take photos of your cutting-edge cuisine for Facebook and Twitter. For modern lines and technical touches, use the the Fusion Infinity Wine Glass Set (16 glasses for \$199) and the Wine Enthusiast Electric Push Button Corkscrew (\$29.95), both at [wineenthusiast.com](http://wineenthusiast.com).



## Wine List

Focus on the New World for your modern holiday. Look for lean, clean Sauvignon Blanc or Chardonnay from Chilean producer Cono Sur, whose motto is “No family trees, no dusty bottles, just quality wine.” Or look even further south into Argentina's Patagonia region for Pinot Noirs from Bodega Chacra—the vines may be old, but Patagonia's Rio Negro Valley is one of the newest fine-wine producing areas in the country. For Shiraz or Cabernet Sauvignon, head to Australia's Barossa Valley for bottlings from First Drop, which was a virtual winery until producing its first in-house vintage in 2011.



## Beer & Cocktails

You can go molecular on the cocktails by using agar and nitrogen, or simply serve clean, triple-distilled spirits in clear glasses with architectural lines. For beer, look to Italy, where breweries like Birra del Borgo and Birrifico Le Baladin offer solid sips.

## Playlist

Look for compilations that emphasize the glamorous, contemporary tone of the evening like *Hôtel Costes* or *City Lounge*. You can step it up a notch with lively music from LCD Soundsystem's *This Is Happening*.





*Boho Holidays*





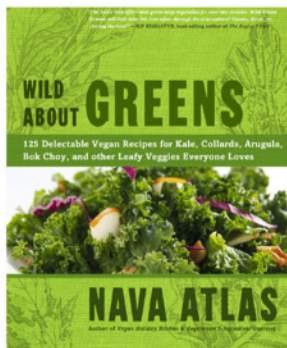
Retro is all the rage—as is organic and locally sourced cuisine—so celebrate the season in 1960s Bohemian style. You can spread the communal spirit by asking each guest to bring a dish, or you can all pitch in together to set the table or clean up.

This whimsical party encourages interaction, healthy eating and the sharing of food and drinks off the beaten path of typical holiday fare.

## Menu

Be kind to your animal friends and host a plant-based feast for the holidays. Nava Atlas's *Wild About Greens\** (Sterling, 2012) serves up an almost infinite variety of appetizers and main courses using a veritable cornucopia of leafy vegetables. *Foraged Flavor: Finding Fabulous Ingredients in Your Backyard or Farmer's Market\*\** (Clarkson Potter, 2012), by Tama Matsuoka Wong with Eddy Leroux, is a seasonal guide to using wild plants at the table.

Oven-Baked Kale Chips\*  
Wine- and Mustard-Braised  
Asian Greens\*  
Caramelized Braised Endive  
with Juniper Berries\*\*



Hoisin-Glazed Bok Choy with  
Tofu and Soba Noodles\*  
Wild Raisin Crème Brûlée\*\*



## Off The Menu

### CARAMELIZED BRAISED ENDIVE WITH JUNIPER BERRIES

Adapted from *Foraged Flavor: Finding Fabulous Ingredients in Your Backyard or Farmer's Market* (Clarkson Potter, 2012) by Tama Matsuoka Wong with Eddy Leroux

4 medium Belgian endives  
4 tablespoons unsalted butter  
1 tablespoon ground dried  
eastern red cedar juniper  
berries, plus more for serving  
1 tablespoon granulated sugar  
Salt and freshly ground black  
pepper, to taste

Preheat an oven to 325°F.

Prepare the endives by removing the outer leaves and cutting away the tough bottoms.

Melt the butter in a small heavy ovenproof skillet over medium-low heat, add the endives, and sprinkle with the juniper and sugar. Season with salt and pepper.

Cook, turning the endives gently after the color changes on one side, about 25 minutes, or until the outside edges turn a medium caramel brown.

Cover the skillet and transfer to the oven for about 45 minutes. The endives should turn a deep chocolate color but still be soft and melty. Sprinkle with a pinch of ground juniper before serving. *Serves 4.*

## Décor

Life was simpler in the '60s, and your choice of materials should be, too. Natural fibers like raffia or hemp are perfect on your holiday table. Lay a foundation of earth tones with rustic placemats and linens, and then blow it up with a riot of colorful napkins, plates and glassware. Live plants—not cut flowers—belong on the hippie holiday table, and bring back multicolor drip candles in straw-wrapped Chianti bottles for a fun and funky touch. Small condiment bowls carved from quartz or jade add '60s energy to the holiday table. Create an intimate, earthy ambiance with **Wine Cork Candles** (\$19.95 for set of four), and the do-it-yourself crafts craze of the era with the **Wine Cork Serving Tray Kit** (\$39.95), both at [wineenthusiast.com](http://wineenthusiast.com).



## Wine List

Organic, biodynamic and eco-friendly are the buzzwords for this party, and California wines fit the theme well. Look to Sonoma for Benziger Family Winery's biodynamically and organically farmed Cabernet Sauvignon, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc or Chardonnay. Napa's Robert Sinskey Vineyards produces excellent Pinot Noir, Pinot Blanc and Pinot Gris from organic vines. If you want to reduce packaging waste and carbon emissions—and you're cooking for a crowd—stock up on 3-liter boxes of Big House Red or Bota Box Zinfandel.



## Beer & Cocktails

Seek out organic or small-batch local spirits like Crop Organic Vodka or Brooklyn Gin. Use artisanal mixers like Q Tonic, or offer fruit and vegetable juices. With the American craft-beer movement in full swing, look for what's locally available, and consider organic beers by Deschutes Brewery from Oregon and Uinta Brewing from Utah to fit the theme.



## Playlist

Evoked the era with songs by Peter, Paul and Mary; Bob Dylan; Judy Collins; The Byrds; Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young; The Doors; and The Mamas and The Papas. Round out the soundtrack with some Indian-inspired world music by Ravi Shankar.





*Rattle Those Pots and Pans*





Holidays bring back childhood memories of homestyle family dinners. There's no better time to prepare good old-fashioned comfort food, and there's no better way to serve it than directly from your beautiful cookware. Let oven-to-table be your mantra this season, and remember that the best way to feed your family is family style! Elbows don't belong on the table, but your colorful Dutch oven, enamelware, casserole dishes and frying pans deserve pride of place this year.

## Menu

Choose dishes that can be served right in the pan. Rachael Ray's *My Year in Meals*\* (Atria Books, 2012) is a daily diary of everything the celebrated Food Network personality cooked and ate over the course of a year, including recipes and serving suggestions. The cuisine runs toward comfort food for a crowd and will look great served on the table in colorful cookware. Lisa Caponigri's *Whatever Happened to Sunday Dinner?*\*\* (Sterling Epicure, 2012) lays out 52 Italian-style menus. Make sure to have two gorgeous loaf pans on hand for the Sicilian meatloaf (*polpettone alla Siciliana*) and the pine nut loaf cake (*torta di pinoli*).



Mushroom and Burgundy Stew\*  
Chicken Pot Pie\*  
Macaroni & Cheese with Fennel\*

Sicilian Meatloaf\*\*  
Pine Nut Loaf Cake\*\*



## Off The Menu

### SICILIAN MEATLOAF (Polpettone alla Siciliana)

Adapted from *Whatever Happened to Sunday Dinner?* (Sterling Epicure, 2012) by Lisa Caponigri

1 pound ground pork  
1 pound ground veal  
1 pound ground beef sirloin  
2 large eggs  
1 cup plain breadcrumbs  
¼ cup golden raisins  
¼ cup pine nuts  
2 garlic cloves, chopped  
Sea salt, to taste  
Freshly ground black pepper,  
to taste

Preheat an oven to 350°F.

Mix all of the ingredients together in a large bowl. Transfer the mixture to an 8- by 4-inch loaf pan.

Bake the meatloaf for 1 hour, or until brown and crunchy on top.

Serves 8–10.

## Décor

Let your cookware be your guide when choosing a color palette. Is your cookware copper, bright enamel, stainless steel, cast iron or a blend? Family style can get messy, so skip the table cloth in favor of cloth or leather placemats and wood, enamel or cork trivets for your hot pots and pans. Clunky ceramic dishes will look best with a selection of serving vessels on the table, and Mason jars or tumblers are ideal for beer, cocktails or even wine. Break out your most photogenic serving spoons and spatulas, and be sure your potholders are equally presentable. **Riedel Stemless “O” Glasses** (\$24.95 for a set of four) and **Mason Jar Glasses** (\$19.95 for a set of four), both available at [wineenthusiast.com](http://wineenthusiast.com), reflect the relaxed and playful style of the evening.



## Wine List

It's comfort-food season, so stay in your comfort zone and go with what you know. Head for the Old World aisle of your wine shop. Stock up on Chardonnay and Pinot Noir from venerable Burgundy houses like Louis Jadot and Louis Latour. If you're celebrating with a bit of bubbly, grab some Champagne from Moët et Chandon. Italy is the place to go for Soave Bolla, or Chianti Classico bottled by Antinori or Rocca delle Macie. From Spain, you can't get more classic than Tempranillo from Muga or R. López de Heredia in Rioja.



## Beer & Cocktails

Mix it up old school: Offer your guests a choice of classic cocktails, such as an old fashioned, martini or Manhattan, or find Grandma's punch bowl and fill it with eggnog. The acidity of a Belgian lambic will match nicely with intense stews, cutting through the weight of the dish.



## Playlist

You're updating the classics in the kitchen, so why not do the same with the music? Tony Bennett's *Duets II*, *Trav'lin' Light* by Queen Latifah, and Diana Ross's *The Blue Album* will mix and mingle nicely alongside originals by Frank Sinatra, Ella Fitzgerald and Mel Tormé.

