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WINE ENTHUSIAST

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10 BEST

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2013

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CARNIVAL CRUISING

Cure Your Cabin Fever this Season with a Raucous Pre-Lenten Party.

Here we are, stuck in the gloomiest part of winter, the magic of the holidays has faded yet glorious spring is still weeks (and here in New York, likely several blizzards) away. We can't think of a better time to host a party. Thankfully Carnival, one of the planet's biggest collective shindigs, provides the perfect template for throwing a midwinter blowout. Here are a few fete ideas from around the world to help you create yours.

RIO DE JANEIRO

Break out a headdress and mix up some caipirinhas. Then pour some Brazilian sparkling wine—we like Aurora's Carnival Moscato or Casa Valduga's NV Brut 130—and put a flame under your pot of *feijoada*, or Brazilian bean stew. A little bossa nova from Astrud Gilberto and Caetano Veloso will get everyone's hips and feet moving.

NEW ORLEANS

For N'awlins-style Mardi Gras partying, mix up a punch bowl of hurricanes, load the playlist with zydeco and cook some gumbo, jambalaya and red beans with rice. Drape your friends with brightly colored beads when they come through the door. Don't forget to make a tray of muffulettas and offer guests Louisiana's own Abita beer.

VENICE

Unless you live in a marble *palazzo*, ball gowns are a bit of a reach. But have your guests wear ornate masks to set the scene for a Venetian-inspired Carnevale. Greet your pals with an Aperol spritz, then bring on the bubbly with Bottega's glamorous Venetian Gold Prosecco. Lay a table of *cicchetti*—Venetian small plates—for your guests to graze on as they celebrate the last day of revelry before the Lenten fast.

PORT OF SPAIN, TRINIDAD

If you can't dance in the streets of Port of Spain, you can still party like the Trinidadians, who throw one the most colorful and feel-good festivals of all. Download some steel drum music and cook up Trinidadian finger foods, like "doubles," which are fried flatbreads stuffed with a mash of chickpeas, tamarind and spices. Wash it down with the island's sweet Carib beer. And don't forget the rum punch made with two of Trinidad's most famous products: 10 Cane Rum and Angostura Bitters.

CÁDIZ

For a Spanish soiree, start your party off with healthy pours of González Byass Tio Pepe Fino Sherry. In Cádiz, revelers drink and watch the *chirigotas*, or acting troupes, perform satirical and irreverent political skits in the streets. To replicate this at home, ask your guests to dress as their favorite political figures and watch the drama unfold. Make sure to serve your guests *marisco* salad, white anchovies and fried calamari. And keep that Sherry flowing.

—MIKE DeSIMONE & JEFF JENSSEN

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