

No.1/December 2010

HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING



3
TIPS

THE EASIEST HOLIDAY DINNER EVER

Debbie Travis gives her tips for
enjoying—and staying sane—this holiday season

It's all in the details
The Opener's David
Adjey dishes on the
best parties



Safe holidays
Tips for being a
responsible host



Spice it up
Bal Ameson explains
how to throw in a
pinch of this or that

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CHALLENGES



TIP

1

TRY A NEW COCKTAIL OR WINE VARIETY THIS HOLIDAY

WE RECOMMEND

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Be a responsible host
How to ensure the safety for all your guests—even after they leave your party.

Regardless of what you’re **celebrating**, the Holidays are the ultimate opportunity to connect with the ones you **love** and enjoy some great **food**.

This holiday season, indulge in flavour overload

Like it or not, says LCBO vice-president of merchandizing Shari Mogk-Edwards, the millennial generation was raised on taste-bud overload, so if you’re looking to follow beverage trends over the holidays—you should aim to satisfy with flavour.

“This whole flavour movement is being driven by the new consumer,” says Mogk-Edwards. “Their expectations are very different, they tend to look for more flavour.”

Mogk-Edwards says the younger generations go for the flavoured vodkas and mixed drinks more than anything.

The black cherry-infused Red Stag bourbon is also an interesting twist on an old favourite.

Of course that’s not to say you can’t stick to the classics such as sherry or port.

“Port is great for after dinner to just relax or to have something special,” says the liquor-expert.

Regardless of your preference, the holidays are a time to be merry and what better way to do that than good food and beverages.

“When it comes to entertaining at this time of year, people tend to spend more money on alcohol,” says

Mogk-Edwards.

A-fizz-cionado

One of the unknown tricks of the trade during the holidays is serving sparkling wine.

“If you entertain and have a big dinner, start with fizz because it is probably the most versatile type of wine and tends to go well with most food,” says Mogk-Edwards. “Whether you’re having dessert or a turkey, that product will match with anything.”

Surprisingly, Rosé is also popular around this time. The summertime drink has seen a 60 to 70 percent year-on-year growth in sales and part of it is due to it’s coupling with turkey.

“Turkey’s a funny thing, it’s very dry so what do you serve with it?” says the LCBO merchandiser. “Rosé’s a great turkey wine, as long as it’s dry as well.”

Spice is nice

“People are really becoming interested in trying new things and pairing them with foods,” says Mogk-Edwards.

She notes that beer has garnered unexpected interest as a buddy for spicy food.

The Austrian white wine Grüner Veltliner and its Rhine-river col-



Shari Mogk-Edwards
Vice-president of merchandising, LCBO

MY BEST TIPS

For a festive bar

1 Bailey’s Irish Cream is popular this time of year. It can be used in both mixes and to add an extra zing to coffee.

2 The LCBO has a selection of pre-made cocktails like Casers and Mojitos - just add garnish, pour in a fancy glass and serve.

3 Try mixing Hennessy Black, a cognac, with champagne for a holiday drink.

league Gewürztraminer also go well with spicy food.

Go local

“You’re not going to get beer fresher than a local craft beer,” says Mogk-Edwards.

And it’s not just the local beers that are great.

“I’ve been in the business for 30 years and I can honestly say in the last 2-3 years Canada has become a global leader in wines,” she says. “Because the world of wine is so competitive it put a challenge in front of the local guys - and we’re really proud of (them).”

Mogk-Edwards recommends checking out the VQA (Vintners Quality Alliance) section of the LCBO for good local wines.

“Our local craft here is really exploding,” notes Mogk-Edwards.

There’s also been a shift by VQA towards social responsibility, with bottles being made with lightweight glass and screw tops.

“From an entertaining perspective you just leave it out there and you don’t have to worry about the product having to be corked.”

ANDREW SEALE

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Go local this holiday season

In Canada when people start to think about eating local, images of summer berries, peaches and corn come to mind.

But eating local is something that Canadians can do year-round.

Lori Stahlbrand, founder and president of Local Food Plus, a non-profit organization that certifies local sustainable food products, is an advocate for eating local foods all year, especially during the holiday season. “You really can have a full meal made up entirely of certified local sustainable products,” says Stahlbrand. “These were the products people used to celebrate whatever was in season at the time.”

“The traditional foods that we eat during these celebrations are ones that were produced right in our own regions. That’s what the first European settlers ate when they would celebrate Christmas; there was very little that they had imported so they used foods that were from Ontario that they had produced

themselves.”

With the abundance of food that is produced across Canada, a local holiday meal can really be robust and allows Canadians to eat with the seasons and support local economies. To start off your holiday feast, a cheese plate featuring a variety of cow, sheep or goat’s milk cheeses will have your guests forgetting about cheeses imported from Europe.

Savory sides

For the main meal, local turkeys or ham are both great options. Traditional holiday side dishes allow local produce to really shine. Consider serving sweet potatoes, carrots, squash or a variety of root vegetables. The use of greenhouses across the country allow Canadians to have locally-grown foods such as tomatoes and peppers all year.

The holiday table wouldn’t be complete without desserts. A wide variety of desserts can be made with seasonal fruits such as apple or pears or you can enjoy ice creams made with local milk. To round out the feast, try serving tradi-

tional apple cider or wines from Canada’s wine regions.



Lori Stahlbrand
Founder and President, Local Food Plus

“The traditional foods that we eat during these celebrations...were produced right in our own regions.”

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HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING
1ST EDITION, DECEMBER 2010

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Distributed within:
National Post, December 2010
This section was created by Mediaplanet and did not involve the National Post or its Editorial Departments.

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Mussels Bruschetta

Serves: 2

Cooking time: 30 mins

Add a simple twist to an old favourite. Fresh bread, fresh tomatoes and the special ingredient: fresh Blue Mussels. Your bruschetta will be the talk of the party.

- 4 tbsp extra virgin olive oil
- 2 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 cup white wine
- 2 ripe tomatoes, peeled, seeded, and diced
- 4 broad, thick slices of country bread
- 16 fresh cultured blue mussels
- 1 pinch crushed hot red pepper
- 1 tbsp fresh parsley, chopped

1. Rinse the fresh blue mussels in tap water.
2. In a wide, shallow pan over medium heat, warm half the oil. Add half the garlic and cook until the garlic turns gold, about three minutes. Add the fresh blue mussels, cover, and cook over high heat until the shells are open, about five minutes.
3. Add half the wine and cook un-



covered until the alcohol has evaporated, about two minutes. Remove from the heat. When cool enough to handle, remove and discard the shells.

4. In a clean wide, shallow pan over medium heat, warm the remaining oil. Add the remaining garlic and the crushed red pepper, and cook for about three minutes, until the garlic turns gold.
5. Add the remaining wine, and continue cooking until it evaporates, about three minutes.
6. Add the tomatoes and fresh blue mussel mixture, and cook for 5 minutes more. Add the parsley, stir, and remove from the heat.
7. Grill or toast the bread and top each slice with a portion of the fresh blue mussel mixture.

Courtesy of DiscoverMussels.com

Mussels with Roasted Peppers and Salsa Verde

Serves: 8

Prep time: 30 mins

Cooking time: 15 mins

- 5 lb blue mussels
- 3 peppers—red, green and yellow
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 2 clove garlic, chopped
- 1/2 tsp dried red chili flakes
- 1 can diced plum tomatoes
- 1 cup white wine
- sea salt flakes and cracked pepper, to taste
- 2 tbsp capers, rinsed
- 1 handful flat leaf parsley
- 1 handful fresh basil
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tbsp red wine vinegar
- 1/3 cup olive oil, (or enough to make a smooth paste)
- 1 loaf of crusty bread to sop up juices

1. Rinse mussels in a colander and set aside.
2. Preheat broiler to high. Put peppers (whole) on a cookie sheet and slide directly under the broiler. Broil peppers, turning with tongs, as they char. This can also be done on a

barbecue, directly over the flame. Once peppers are charred, place in bowl and cover with plastic wrap. The steam will loosen the charred skin. When cool enough to handle, remove core, seeds and blackened skin. Chop flesh into cubes and set aside.

3. Heat olive oil over medium heat in a large, heavy-bottomed pan. Add onion and cook for 5 minutes, stirring, until slightly translucent. Add garlic and chili flakes and sauté 2-3 minutes more. Turn up the heat to medium high. Add tomatoes and their juice, white wine and salt and pepper to taste. Stir well, add mussels and cover. Steam for 5 minutes, or until mussels are open. Discard any mussels that do not open.

4. While mussels are steaming, blitz salsa verde ingredients, except for the oil, together in a food processor. Add oil until you have a liquid-y paste.

5. Transfer mussels to a serving dish. Top with generous drizzle of salsa verde.

6. Toss everything together and serve.



Shortcuts

■ Make ahead: prepare tomato sauce, except for the white wine and mussels, up to two days in advance. Before serving, heat sauce in a large pot, add white wine and mussels.

■ Salsa Verde can be made up to four hours in advance. Cover surface directly with plastic wrap and refrigerate until needed. Or, substitute purchased pesto, thinned with a little olive oil, instead.

■ Instead of roasting your own peppers, substitute roasted peppers from a jar. Drain liquid, roughly chop peppers, and add to sauce as above.

Courtesy of DiscoverMussels.com

Mussels with Shaved Fennel and Saffron

Ingredients

- 5 lbs fresh blue mussels
- 1 fennel bulb, diced trimmed
- 2 tbsp butter
- 1 tbsp olive oil
- 1 onion, finely sliced
- 3 clove garlic, finely sliced
- 1 bay leaf
- 1 pinch saffron strands (or substitute with a pinch of turmeric)
- sea salt flakes and cracked pepper, to taste
- 1 cup white wine
- 1 lemon, zest and juice
- 1 loaf crusty bread, to sop up juices

Instructions

1. Rinse mussels in a colander and set aside.
2. Trim stalks from fennel and using a vegetable peeler, remove blemishes from outer layer. Reserve fennel fronds for garnish. Finely slice fennel into thin strands – this can be done with a mandolin or a knife.
3. Melt 1 tablespoon of the butter and olive oil in a large, heavy-bottomed pan.
4. Add fennel, onion, garlic and sauté over medium-low heat for about 10 minutes, until soft.
5. Stir in saffron, bay leaf, sea salt and pepper to taste. Turn up the heat to medium high.
6. Add wine and remaining butter; stir, then add the mussels. Cover and leave to steam for 5 minutes, or until mussels have opened.
7. Discard any mussels that do not open.
8. Toss everything together with lemon zest and juice.
9. Transfer mussels to individual plates or a serving dish. Top with reserved fennel fronds. (Serves 8)

A delicious, low-fat holiday treat. (Hint hint, Santa.)



Lindsay Cameron Wilson
Best-selling cookbook author and Home Consumer Chef for the Mussel Industry Council

I'm Chef Lindsay Cameron Wilson. I've discovered that with fresh blue cultured mussels, making holiday magic is easy. As a star ingredient, fresh mussels are ideal as an entrée or an appetizer. They take just 5-7 minutes to steam and you can combine them with almost any ingredient.

While I find that most holiday foods tend to be on the rich side, mussels are high in protein and low in calories. Not only will your guests be impressed, fresh mussels are so quick and easy to prepare, you'll actually have time to spend with them!

For more healthy and delicious recipes, like Lindsay's *Mussels with Shaved Fennel and Saffron*, visit discovermussels.com.


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NEWS



NEWS IN BRIEF

Save a bundle with Secret Santa

Purchasing holiday gifts for everyone on your list often leaves your wallet empty.

However, even though most people will still make the effort, the idea of participating in a gift exchanging game amongst friends and family has been a popular tradition.

Most people are aware of the well-liked game called Secret Santa but in addition to this entertaining gift exchanging game, new ones have recently surfaced such as the White Elephant game. In this friendly competition, all guests are required to sit in a large circle surrounding the group of gifts which are placed in the middle. The first guest will choose a gift and unwrap it, the second guest may either choose another gift or steal from the first person and this process is repeated until all of the gifts have been taken. Another amusing idea is a gift hunt. The host is required to hide all of the gifts in strategic locations around the venue and then write down a series of clues on pieces of paper which will lead the guests to the hidden treasures. This activity involves a bit of energy, but will entertain all participants and give them the chance to interact with each other and have some fun.

Despite the fact that you may receive fewer gifts than normal this season, gift exchanging is great because no one will be left out and everyone will receive a gift of some kind within the same price range. According to Lisa Garofalo, event planner with Bliss Events, “Gift exchanging is definitely lighter on the wallet and also a nice way to put more focus on one person instead of a large group of people. It will allow you more time to put greater thought into your gift as well.”

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Quick Recipe

Lychee martini

- 1 cup lychee juice (see note)
 - 1/2 cup pink grapefruit juice, preferably fresh-squeezed
 - 1/2 cup chilled vodka
 - Ice cubes
 - 12 fresh lychees, peeled and pitted, or 1 can (398 ml/14 oz) lychees, drained
 - 6 thin slices lime
- 1.** Note: If you can't find lychee juice, use canned lychee syrup.
- 2.** In a cocktail shaker, combine the lychee juice, grapefruit juice, vodka and ice cubes. Shake or stir well. Strain into martini glasses. Garnish each drink with 2 lychees and 1 lime slice.
- 3.** Note: Freeze the lychees before putting them in the martinis.

Courtesy of FoodNetwork.ca



'Tis the season for serving up suds

CHANGE

■ **Question:** Looking for a striking way to serve up beer this holiday season?

■ **Answer:** By making the presentation unexpected, beer can be as elegant as a festive cocktail.

When it comes to beverages, the holidays seem to always be about wine, eggnog and expensive liquor, but beer can be just as elegant when served right, including as a key marinade in preparing a meal.

Since beer tends to be consumed directly from a bottle or pint glass, it doesn't have the same image when compared to wine. And since draft beer isn't usually a feasible option for a holiday gathering, it might be best to change the way it's served by using a decanter and pouring it into sherry or port glasses instead.

"Guests don't expect to be served beer that way, so it's very unique and memorable," says Steve Stradiotto, a brewing specialist at Molson Coors Canada. "I find it enhances the beer experience, plus it also provides the perfect complement to savoury dishes."

This makes pairing dishes with beer just as important as doing so with wine or spirits. Stradiotto



"Beer can be used creatively for holiday meal preparations."

Steve Stradiotto
Brewing specialist, Molson Coors Canada

suggests that light beers pair better with spicy or salty foods because they aren't as malty and have less hoppiness, so the flavour profile of the beer won't be as strong. A full-flavoured beer, on the other hand, goes well with red meat and heavier seafood dishes.

A flavoured darker beer pairs well with lamb or roasts, both as a marinade and as a complementary beverage. Beers with citrus components are perfect for poultry and fish, Stradiotto says.

"Beer can be used creatively for holiday meal preparations, be it

RECIPE

Rickard's White Mussels

- Ingredients:**
- 1/3 cup celery (finely diced)
 - 1/3 cup shallots (finely diced)
 - 2 cloves garlic (pureed)
 - 1 tbsp ginger (finely diced)
 - 1 tbsp sesame oil
 - 1-341ml bottle of Rickard's White
 - Couple drops of hot sauce or
 - A pinch of crushed chili peppers
 - 2.2 lbs. Mussels
 - Approx. 10 diced coriander

- leaves**
- Salt & pepper to taste

Preparation:

Sweat celery, shallot, ginger and garlic in sesame oil until soft (don't brown). Add beer, coriander leaves, a couple drops of hot sauce and mussels. Add salt and pepper to taste. Cover and steam until shells open, about 3-5 minutes. Serve in bowl with reduced cooking stock and fresh baked bread. Makes 2 servings.

as a marinade, a baste while cooking or incorporated into glazes," he says. "The type of beer used or served is largely dependent on the food being served because you want the beer to compliment your meal."

One example he gives is of white mussels that can be made with beer that has citrus notes in it as a key ingredient to give it a more unique taste and aroma. In addition, lamb lollipops are an ideal choice to include a darker beer, while an appetizer like a red cheddar leek soup is perfect for a beer that isn't too light or dark. The amount used as an ingredient can vary based on the dish and the number of servings, but regardless, it might prove to be a boon to the dinner once guests comment approvingly on the unique taste.

Experimenting with different combinations can help in discovering some tasty ideas that could become holiday specialties moving forward as well. This can even include existing recipes where beer can complement the meal preparation.

"It's a great way to enjoy a delicious meal, as one great flavour deserves another," he says.

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Enjoy holiday treats without overdoing it

The holidays are a great time to catch up with friends, family and co-workers, but all that socializing, and the accompanying treats, can lead to extra pounds that stay around long after the decorations come down.

With some careful planning however, you can enjoy your favourite foods over the holidays without sacrificing your health or waistline.

It's easy to put food choices last around this time of year when everyone is busy running around shopping for

presents or heading to holiday parties. To avoid grabbing something unhealthy on the road, or subsisting solely on chips during December, pack a healthy snack like a handful of nuts for a little boost later.

The key to enjoying holiday engagements is to avoid restricting indulgences too much. According to Amanda Skrip, a nutrition and wellness coach, "If there is something you love, and absolutely must have, don't restrict yourself. "Enjoy a small amount and then move on". While everything in moderation is a great way to attack the holiday season it's a good idea to stay clear from the

usual culprits like fried foods, processed meats and cheese, and creamy sauces.

With the endless tables of treats at parties you can still make some smart choices. Skrip suggests choosing shrimp cocktail or using veggies with dips instead of the usual bread or crackers. It's also good idea to choose champagne or white wine to save some calories when it comes to drinks.

If you do go overboard, all is not lost. Try "resetting" your system by starting your day with the juice of half a lemon in a glass of room temperature water to alkalinize your system.

While overindulging over the holi-

days isn't ideal, Skrip recommends keeping holiday indulgences in perspective by striving for what she calls the 80/20 balance. "Eat well 80 percent of the time," says Skrip. "The remaining 20 percent you can enjoy yourself and occasionally splurge."

And remember, the holidays aren't just about food! At parties don't park yourself in front of the food table suggests Skrip. "Enjoy mingling and socializing and only nosh when/if hungry."

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INSPIRATION

Question: How does Debbie Travis turn a notoriously stressful dinner into an event enjoyed by all, even the host?
Answer: She enacts a plan of action.

TIP

2

TACKLE YOUR SHOPPING AND PLANNING IN STAGES

The easiest holiday dinner ever

LEADER TO LEADER

Hosting a Christmas or festive holiday dinner can be a wonderful privilege to have, except it's not as simple as putting food on a table with a lit-up Christmas tree as a backdrop.

TV personality and designer Debbie Travis is renowned for entertaining and enlightening Canadians through shows like All for One with Debbie Travis and Debbie Travis' Facelift. But she also knows the challenges of hosting and entertaining family and friends for Christmas dinner every year. She admits tradition is inherent in what she does, but she also prefers to add something a little unique each year.

"I think it's really trendy today to mix old and new, like your grandmother's vintage wine glasses with very modern plates," Travis says. "I also have a game where I put different ornaments on the plates, so that each guest has to tell a story the ornament triggers, which can be quite funny."

Making the table the entertainment centrepiece helps get everyone involved and talking, especially before dinner is served, Travis adds. Sometimes she has all the children orchestrate games to bring them into the fray, or she has a few games in mind that can take place between courses. The idea is to have fun and keep the conversation lively for everyone.

Crowd pleaser
It's not easy to make everyone happy and keep them entertained, particularly when you have guests spanning three generations or more. Despite the pressure associated with a dinner like this, Travis says she doesn't worry as much about things like food preferences, table setup and décor because she wants guests to interact and make memories.

"A holiday gathering exaggerates everybody's personalities because you're all rubbing up against each other," she explains. "But this can be a very good thing because it's one day of the year where people who have problems can make amends and start fresh

again, which I think is really nice."
In addition to that, Travis also points out that she always invites at least one person who may not otherwise have a place to go that day as a warm gesture, like a close friend or someone accompanying one of your guests.

First-time hosts
For first-timers hosts, Travis suggests they enact a plan of action to keep things in order. This requires thinking ahead and covering things like decorations, gifts and foodstuffs separately beforehand, and not in a rush or panic. The first two can be taken care of earlier, but the last two days before the dinner

TIPS

Make hosting easier

- Put a plan together, decide on a budget and don't be shy about asking guests to bring bottles of wine and champagne.
- If cost is an issue, have a guest or two bring desserts for the meal.
- Make room in your fridge by cleaning it out a week before the dinner.
- Decorate your home a good two-to-three weeks prior to the dinner.
- Set up the table a day or two in advance. Feel free to delegate that to family members as well.
- Consider including parents

- and grandparents by using their glasses, cutlery, napkins or any item that they liked to use for Christmas dinner.
- Don't try to accomplish shopping for gifts, décor and foodstuffs in one shot — you will almost certainly miss something. Separate them by doing them on different days, or even different weeks.
- Think about extending invites to friends of other faiths, as well as those who may have nowhere else to go that day.
- If there is someone who can take the reins of entertaining everyone before dinner, make him or her the "jester".



ALL FOR ONE airs Sunday nights at 9 PM EST (9:30 NFLD)/10 PM PST on CBC.
PHOTO: TIM LEVES

should be entirely focused on food preparation, she says.

She goes on to suggest that it's also best not to worry too much about the little things you might consider disastrous because most people won't even notice anyway. Offer guests something to drink after they come in, and don't be afraid to ask them for a helping hand should you need one.

"The kitchen is just bedlam on that day, and though you don't want to be stuck in there as the host and chef, it's very hard to time everything to not be in the kitchen," she says. "The chaos of Christmas and the holidays is exhilarating for women, but for men who aren't as involved, they are very good

at following instructions, so if you want him to get potatoes, be sure to tell him what kind you need."

But with younger men becoming better cooks, their role in the kitchen might be more like sous chefs rather than gofers. But even in that scenario as a host and head chef, provide some guidance to everyone helping out before and during the food prep, she says.

"A Christmas dinner is like any job where you have deadlines and responsibilities and it's important to make it work," she says. "It has to work because if it doesn't, the day ends in tears."

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David Adjey is all about the details

This year, all I want for Christmas is an invitation to David Adjey's Christmas party.

For those of you unfamiliar with the TV chef, his show *The Opener* on the Food Network Canada takes him across the country, showing tough love and helping amateur restaurateurs build well-oiled establishments.

But reputation aside, this chef knows how to entertain.

"Impressing people is in the details," says Adjey, taking a break from filming. "We have a tendency to just do things in broad strokes but it's all about the details."

Take, for example, his Mardi Gras-themed Christmas party a few years back.

"We had Dr. John playing in the background," says Adjey. "You know those crackers your mom gets at Christmas with the tissue paper crowns? We had the actual Mardi Gras crowns."

The food was all New Orleans-inspired—even the drinks fit the theme.

"We had a couple cases of Dixie beer," says the chef. "Look, I'm not going to have you over and serve you a Heineken if it's a New Orleans party."

Don't just stand there

You can outsource too, notes the chef. "Everyone talk about how they're going to spend the holidays slaving in the kitchen—don't! Just go to the market



ENTERTAINING EXPERT

Up until January, *The Opener* airs Tuesday nights at 9pm ET/10pm PT on Food Network Canada, but effective January 3rd, *The Opener* airs Wednesday nights at 11pm ET/8pm PT on Food Network Canada.

PHOTO: FOOD NETWORK

and buy some pre-made food."

For him, the key to entertaining guests in to give them something dif-

ferent with food that has a story behind it.

"Food, drink, good music; these are

the real gifts you can give," he says. "You want your friends to say, 'Dave's party was the best

man,' and when they're asked why, they just say 'I don't know, it just was'—you want that sensory overload."

The golden rule

Adjey also worked as Dan Akroyd's personal chef. He spoke about one year at Christmas when Akroyd lost a chef.

"Dan called me in a panic and said 'can you stop everything and come have Christmas with me?'," remembers Adjey. "So I brought my kids and my wife and I went up and cooked my ass off."

The biggest lesson learned from working with Akroyd is, to this day, his mantra.

"When it comes to entertaining, make sure you have an unlimited supply of champagne at all times—you never know when the party is going to break out."

Adjey's advice for an unforgettable party? just find a theme and immerse yourself in the details.

"My friends are jaded just like me—If I bring them over and am like 'here's mashed potatoes' it's not an experience." "Put together a meal that has a story behind it."

ANDREW SEALE

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AN APPLE A DAY
Anna Olson makes the most of this staple year-round.
PHOTO: FOOD NETWORK

COOKING WITH APPLES

Curried Chicken with Apples

- 1 1/2 cups roughly chopped onion
- 3 cloves garlic, sliced
- 1/2 inch piece of fresh ginger, peeled
- 1 hot chili pepper (optional)
- 2 tablespoons vegetable oil
- 1/2 teaspoon cumin seeds
- 1 cup crushed tomatoes (canned)
- 1/4 cup full-fat plain yogurt
- 1 teaspoon ground coriander
- 1/2 teaspoon ground cumin
- 1/2 teaspoon ground turmeric
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cayenne (optional)
- 1/4 teaspoon ground black pepper
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 4 whole cloves
- 2 whole star anise
- 8 boneless, skinless chicken thighs
- salt
- 1 1/2 cups peeled and diced Mutsu (Crispin) apple
- 1/3 cup roasted unsalted cashews
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice or 1 tablespoon lime juice
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh coriander leaves

1. In a food processor, puree onion, garlic, ginger and chili (if using) until a paste. Heat oil in a large skillet over medium-high heat for 1 minute. Add cumin seeds and cook for 30 seconds, then add onion paste and stir, cooking for just over 5 minutes, until onions have browned slightly.
2. Add tomatoes and simmer vigorously for about 5 minutes, until reduced slightly, and oil appears at the edges of the liquid.
3. Stir in the yogurt and spices, stirring constantly until evenly blended.
4. Add chicken and season lightly, tossing to coat.
5. Stir in apple and cashews. Cover pan and reduce heat to medium, cooking until chicken has cooked, about 30 minutes, adding 1/2 cup water if sauce evaporates (sauce should coat chicken completely).
6. Immediately before serving, stir in lemon or lime juice and fresh coriander.
7. Adjust seasoning to taste and serve with Fragrant Jasmine Rice.

Courtesy of Foodnetwork.ca

Cooking apples with Anna Olson

The Holidays mark apple-pie baking season for many, but chef Anna Olson says she uses apples all year round—and in ways you may never have thought.

The host of Food Network Canada’s show Fresh says all apples fall into one of two categories: those best to eat, and those with which to cook. “Most apples are not both,” she says. Macintosh, Royal Gala and both red and yellow Delicious all fall into the eating category—they have sweet flavours and tend not to maintain their shape when cooked. “Most other apples can be used for cooking,” Olson says. “They vary in acidity, sweetness and texture, and an apple that is good for sauce may not be good for using in

a pie.” Crispin, also known as the Mutu apple, is one of few varieties well-suited to both. They hold their shape and taste. Olson, who uses Mutu apples in a curry recipe as well as in pie, explains that apples are immensely versatile. Because of their subtle flavour, many of Olson’s soup and salad recipes call for apple. She suggests Cortland because they don’t oxidize—though tossing the sliced apples in lemon juice also works. A sweet switch If Olson wants to avoid using alcohol but it is called for in the recipe, the chef replaces it with apple juice. Apple juice also makes its way into barbecue sauce and glaze recipes of Olson’s—“it adds a subtle sweetness”. Because apples can be kept

throughout the year, their composition changes over time. “With apple pie for example, I make the same recipe all year round and I can see the apples at different stages.” For anyone entering an apple pie contest, Olson suggests adding a layer of oats along the bottom of the crust to absorb the excess liquid—that she says can be up to one cup after baking. “When I make apple pie at this time of year (in the fall), because the apples are so juicy, I add an extra tablespoon of flour to the apple mix and about three tablespoons of oats along the bottom,” she says. “The real secret to winning the apple pie contest though is to use a mix of apple varieties.”

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Curry, spice and everything nice

As you settle in for the season of stove-top slavery, Bal Arneson—or the Spice Goddess, as she is known on the Food Network Canada—implores you to take a shot at infusing your holiday staples with the aromatic flavours of ethnic cooking.

“This is the holidays and they’re not complete without turkey, but you can add to the traditions and take them beyond,” says the TV Chef. And Arneson knows a thing or two about tradition, having mastered her spice blending skills cooking with elders as a child, over coals in a clay pit in a small village in Punjab, India. Her humble upbringing taught her how to create aromatic meals with the bare minimum—most ingredients having been grown or purchased from a nearby market. “We made the most amazing, delicious meals,” she says. “I really believe food is about the laughs and the journey we have growing up with our families.” Now, 18 years, one bestseller (Everyday Indian), a TV show, her own organic spice line and a score of other accomplishments later, Arneson is still basing her cooking around the delicate combination of spices. “Even when I’m mixing things up like turkey stuffing, I add star anise or

other spices,” she says. “I infuse it with those flavours.” A pinch of surprise Putting a spin on your own cooking can be as easy as a dash of toasted spices in your go-to holiday meal or an unexpected side. “Steam the brussel sprouts, toss in some thinly sliced garlic, some thinly sliced ginger and some garam masala,” says Arneson. “Or have a small side of chickpeas mixed with brussel sprouts.” Another way to infuse a hint of something different into a seasonal favourite is to season half a batch of mashed potatoes and keep the other half plain. “Add some garlic, ginger, coriander, cumin and mustard seed,” says Arneson. “Cook them on the side and then mix them together so each bite is intense with flavour but not overpowering.” Arneson says stepping outside your comfort zone will give you a new outlook on holiday cooking. “Once you have the flavours of these beautiful toasted spices you can’t go back to the regular stuff,” she adds. Of course, the spice expert cautions not to go overboard. “I don’t believe in adding so many spices because the you just have that taste of ‘something’ but not the individual flavours.”



A SEASONING SPIN
Spice Goddess airs Wednesday nights at 7pm ET/4pm PT on Food Network Canada.
PHOTO: FOOD NETWORK

Arneson also points out how easy her own dishes are from her cookbook, Everyday Indian, if you’re looking to go the extra mile with your meal. “My cooking is not intimidating at all,” says Arneson.

And all the spices used in her book can be found at your average market. If not, Arneson has started a line of organic spices with part of the proceeds going to the village where she grew up.

“We are who we are because we’re blessed with our surroundings.”

ANDREW SEALE
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NEWS

■ **Answer:** She puts a central focus on music and the bonding of her quests.

“Do you know iTunes Genius? I get

GUEST GURU
Musician Jilly Black finds the best ways for her guests to bond.
 PHOTO: IVAN OTIS

Black remembers one party

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Situated in front of City Hall, this Toronto landmark and one of the most popular skating rinks during the winter months. The rink is open seven days a week from 10 a.m. until 10 p.m. Visitors can rent skates, use indoor change rooms, and enjoy a snack at the concession stand. If you're in the city on New Year's Eve, ring it in at Nathan Phillips Square where there'll be live music, food and fun. Ice skating runs mid-November to mid-March.

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NEWS



Question: How can you ensure that your guests will travel safely this holiday season?
Answer: As a responsible host, it's up to you to keep intoxicated people off the road. Offer lots of alchohol-free options and keep tabs on what guests are consuming.

Be a responsible host

Being a good host may entail putting on a good show and making sure guests enjoy themselves, but keeping them safe from drinking and driving is one of the most important elements to having a successful holiday party.

The perils of drinking and driving are obvious, except they still do little to mitigate the concern hosts have once they let guests out their front doors. The LCBO has pushed forth a campaign that aims to not only educate, but also inform hosts on what they can do to keep guests safe, and cover the little things that can help a party run smoothly.

The LCBO launched the "Deflate the Elephant" campaign a year ago, adding a website filled with tips, tools and questions to help hosts plan ahead. The overlying message is that drinking and driving shouldn't be the elephant in the room, meaning that people should speak up if any guests look like they might be even slightly impaired.

"As a responsible host, it's on you to make sure that they don't consume

enough alcohol to create a drinking and driving situation, and that they get home safely," says Chris Layton of the LCBO. "We've tried to make the site interesting, useful and practical to help hosts plan ahead, so they can put on a safe and enjoyable gathering for everyone."

Treat the designated driver

This includes having ample amounts of non-alcoholic beverages, which the site espouses by offering "mocktail" recipes—elegant mixed drinks based on juices, milk, coffee, fruit and spices that don't require alcohol as an ingredient. Layton says they're easy to make and they give guests something a bit more novel, particularly for designated drivers or teetotalers, instead of just regular soft drinks or juice.

Though it is very common for guests to bring wine, beer or other alcoholic beverages, it might also be a good idea to have guests bring ingredients for cocktails and mocktails as well. Consider having a trusted friend or family member help manage the party to take a bit of the load off the host.

"It's also a good idea to have a designated bartender because he or she can



"As a responsible host, it's on you to make sure that they don't consume enough alcohol to create a drinking and driving situation."

Chris Layton
Media Relations Coordinator, Corporate Communications, LCBO

also keep track of how much everyone has consumed," says Stephanie Petroff, also of the LCBO. "As a host, you have to keep an eye on things and make sure everything is taken care of, all while moderating your own alcohol intake."

Safety pays off

To provide some extra incentive, the LCBO is also launching a free iPhone app called Speak Up! that aims to give hosts some good tips and mocktail recipes, which can be shared via Facebook and Twitter. A Facebook group has also been created to build a community around the campaign as well.

"You can show guests some of the drinks you intend on having with visual images that they can see before the party," Petroff explains. "This foray into social media is a way for people to expand the discussion and share thoughts and ideas on how to be great and responsible hosts."

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Throwing a party? Hire a pro planner

Trying to remember all of the important details of planning the perfect holiday party can be very stressful and overwhelming.

There are many advantages to hiring an event planner to assist you in conceptualizing your vision while staying within your budget. Lisa Garofalo, an event planner with Bliss Events says, "This is such a stressful time of year and hiring an event planner will

allow less stress and an easier transition into the holiday season. Event planners have unique ideas that are outside of the box and it's always nice to try something different." Event planners are also beneficial because they can help you cut costs in every area. Not only will they keep you within budget, but they illustrate a detailed eye and have the right connections to get you exactly what you want.

However, if you're already a pro in the game and don't need a party planner, look into just the neces-

sary tools to carry out your ideas. A popular new trend that is growing in interest is renting everything from chairs to table settings, decor to serving accessories, linens and even event equipment. One of Canada's largest rental party firms, Chair-Man Mills Inc., leads in luxury and experience. Tania Macdiarmid, a senior account manager, believes that this is the best route. "Renting has become so popular because people don't see the need to store event materials all year around if they only use them a

few times a year." With affordable prices and a wide array of options to choose from, you're guests will be amazed by your embellishments, while you will have the best kept secret. Some may call it cheating, while others say it's the smartest way to get a high quality look for less.

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DON'T MISS



Special ways to reward your holiday guests

Finding the perfect way to thank your guests for coming out to your holiday party can be a challenge for any host planning an event.

It's a lot easier said than done; however, it is possible to get your message across in an innovative way. Not only does a thank you gift give you the opportunity to add your own personal touch to your holiday party, the kind gesture is also a fantastic way to show your appreciation to those in attendance. Karla Abramovici, owner of Trade Sensation Events, says, "A thank you gift is an expression of appreciation for a thought or act. Don't worry about the wording being perfect. Sending a gift is just as important as the invitation or event itself.

Make it memorable

Anyone can give a thank you card, but if you want to go a step further, a personalized souvenir is always well received. An important detail to remember is to keep your concept simple. A little goes a long way and your goal is to get your point across as quickly as possible. A great way to accomplish this is by baking a tasty treat such as a batch of cookies, homemade fudge or a dessert of any kind and although it sounds appetizing, it most definitely isn't your only option. Other clever suggestions incorporate engraved items such as glassware, home accessories or customized gift baskets. There are endless ways to thank your guests for attending and knowing that you have placed a smile on their face is priceless.

It adds an exceptional touch which will leave your guests with an admirable memory of that special night so whether you choose to bake a treat or create a gift of your own, give it with love.

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Quick Recipe

Spanish Coffee

- Sugar, for rimming the mug
- Drizzle Galliano, for swirling in the mug
- 1 ounce brandy (30 ml)
- 3/4 ounce Cointreau 22.5 ml)
- 4 to 5-ounces coffee (125 to 155 ml)
- Whipped cream, for garnish
- Splash of coffee liqueur (optional)

1. Rim a tall heavy glass mug with sugar. Drizzle in a little Galliano and swirl around the inside of the mug. Add 1-ounce of Brandy and ¾-ounce Cointreau followed by 4 to 5-ounces rich roasted coffee. Top with whipped cream and a splash of coffee liqueur.

Courtesy of Foodnetwork.ca

PANEL OF EXPERTS

	<div><div>Steve Stradiotto Brewing Specialist, Molson Coors Canada</div></div>	<div><div>Lindsay Cameron Wilson Home Consumer Chef, Mussel Industry Council</div></div>	<div><div>Anne Martin Wine writer for Canadian Living and Canadian House and Home</div></div>
Question 1: What do you love the most about the Holidays?	The parties! I have a “work” party with all my MolsonCoors colleagues, several dinner parties arranged with friends throughout December, and being with my immediate and extended family on Christmas eve and Christmas day... that it what the holidays are all about. At most parties, you can usually find me in the kitchen, with a beer in one hand , and some sort of food in the other while conversing with old acquaintances, friends, or family.	What I love best about this time of year is sharing good food with friends and family and making new holiday memories with my husband and children. We’ve held onto some of our respective traditions- my grandmother’s tourtière on Christmas eve, hand written cards and warm cinnamon rolls on Christmas morning- but are also welcoming the new. Christmas day now includes fresh steamed mussels at lunch, the McGarrigle’s Christmas album and Lego everywhere!	A few of my favorite things about the festive season are: Getting together with family and friends, Christmas carols (when played close to Dec.25!), dreaming up the perfect gifts for loved ones, decorating the tree, eating delicious food/drinking great wines and the excited antics of my son on Christmas morning.
Question 2: What are some of the latest trends in your respective field?	One of the largest food and beverage trends today is health and wellness, covering products made with wholesome ingredients or reduced calories for an active, healthy lifestyle. Cooking with beer and perfecting how to pair flavorful brews with foods is also a growing trend.	Freshness, knowing where our food comes from and its footprint are increasingly important. SeaChoice lists farmed mussels as a “green” seafood to eat and they are healthy being a good source of Omega 3. Blue mussels are naturally occurring in our Atlantic waters and are grown and harvested in an extremely sustainable manner, and the industry supports the continuance of coastal communities. You can feel good about serving farmed mussels.	Wine is always evolving to suit the market and consumer’s tastes. Some trends to watch for are: Less is more (less alcohol, less wood = more bright fruit flavours and wines that pair better with food), buying local (the locavore movement continues to influence) and unusual indigenous grape varietals/emerging wine regions are becoming more widely available and known (who knew Grüner Veltliner would become so popular?). Certain austere economic factors have driven the market to become more value- conscious. Look out for more easy-drinking, affordable and fun wines in the year to come.
Question 3: What are some things to think of when entertaining for a group?	When I really WOW my guests, I like to serve a meal with several courses and then perfectly pair a beer with each course. The beer actually helps cleanse the palate between each course. I recommend an Irish Red for hearty dishes (grilled meats, chicken wings), Dark beers for savory dishes (lamb, pork, Sheppard’s pie), and Wheat beers work well with seafood and chicken dishes. Since every one of your guests will have different taste preferences, it is REALLY important to have a variety of offerings. It’s also recommended you drink from a clean beer glass for full effect. This helps to unlock all the beautiful aromas of the brew for the drinking experience.	I love to entertain , but when planning for a group it is important to take into consideration taste, budget, versatility, and wow factor. I often serve fresh blue cultured mussels as an appetizer or entrée because they meet all my criteria. My guests are impressed and because they are so fast to prepare, I can join in the festivities rather than spending the evening alone in the kitchen.	Think about choosing a wine that suits the event and the crowd. Try to get wines that will pair well with a variety of finger foods for a cocktail party—something dry and crisp in the white department and lower in tannins in the red. Starting off with a great sparkler is always fun and doesn’t have to be expensive with such an international variety of places producing them. Red wine is generally more popular than white these days so be sure to buy more of it. This is the time of year to bring out the fortified/dessert wines—Port, Sherry, Madeira and other stickies are wonderful with dessert or cheese. Have fun, your guests will too. A happy host(ess) is the key to a great party.

COOKING WITH JUICE



Hot Apple Pie Cocktail

Serves: 4
Yields: 1 cup per serving

- 2 ½ cups Simply Apple®
- 4 cinnamon sticks
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- ½ teaspoon allspice
- ¼ teaspoon ground cardamom
- 4 ounces apple schnapps (optional)
- 4 small scoops (1 cup total) of low-fat or fat-free frozen vanilla yogurt

1. Place Simply Apple®, cinnamon sticks, lemon juice, vanilla extract, allspice, and ground cardamom in

a medium saucepan. Warm two to three minutes over medium-high heat, stirring occasionally until mixture is hot and the spices are well blended. Add schnapps if using.

2. Divide between 4 mugs and top with the frozen yogurt. Serve immediately.

***Note: the Hot Apple Pie Cocktail can also be served cold.**

Courtesy of Jennifer Iserloh, the Skinny Chef
Simplyorangejuice.com

Roasted Rack of Lamb with Orange Ginger Glaze and Cranberry Sauce

2.1 oz per chop
Sauce: 1 1/4 cup

- 2 ½ cups Simply Orange®
- ¼ cup orange marmalade
- 1 tablespoon freshly grated ginger
- 1 teaspoon Worcestershire sauce
- 1 teaspoon olive oil
- 1 rack of lamb (16 chops)
- 1 teaspoon salt
- Wax paper or aluminum foil
- ½ cup seasoned whole grain breadcrumbs
- 1 10-ounce bag fresh or frozen whole cranberries
- 2 tablespoons honey
- ¼ cup port wine or water
- 1 tablespoon orange zest
- ¼ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 cups cooked wild rice blend

1. Orange ginger glaze: Place one cup of Simply Orange®, and the marmalade, ginger and Worcester-

shire sauce into a small saucepan. Bring to a boil.

2. Preheat oven to 400 degrees. Heat a large, oven safe skillet over high heat. Add the olive oil. Sprinkle the lamb with salt. Sear each side of the rack about 2 minutes, 8 minutes total for the entire rack. Take the skillet off the heat and drizzle the tops of the rack with half of the orange ginger glaze.
3. Reserve the remaining glaze to serve table side. Place the breadcrumbs on a piece of wax paper or aluminum foil. Dip the racks in the breadcrumbs and return them, meaty side up, to the skillet. Slide the skillet into the oven and bake uncovered about 25 to 30 minutes until the meat is medium rare, slightly red towards the center. Remove from oven and let cool for 5 minutes before slicing.
4. Cranberry sauce: In medium saucepan, stir cranberries, re-



maining 1 ½ cups Simply Orange, honey, port or water, orange zest and ground cloves.

5. Bring to a boil and reduce immediately to a simmer. Cook, 20 to 25 minutes until the cranberries pop and a thick sauce forms. Serve the sauce immediately with the lamb, wild rice blend, and remaining orange ginger glaze for dipping or drizzling over the lamb.

Courtesy of Jennifer Iserloh, the Skinny Chef



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