

Shift into holiday mode CONTINUED FROM PAGE 10



THE HOSTESS: Event planner Amen Pawarlarosa

The dress: INC gold palette dress, \$129. Bracelet, \$28. Available at select Macy's locations.

So, you've set the date for your party. First comes the theme ...

"I love to have themes tied to the cuisine, such as Indian or Moroccan, and that sets the tone for the décor and sometimes even attire. When I invite my guests, I use enticing words that hint to the theme and that gets everyone excited and talking about the party well before the night."

Then the guest list.

"The male-to-female, single-to-married ratio has to be balanced, and it's always great to have both new and old friends. It creates great energy when people are connecting for the first time — with you being the common denominator."

Then get those invites in the ... e-mail?

"Depending on the event, E-vites are a great way to reach a lot of people quickly. Having said that, it's always nice to get a beautiful invite in the mail. It shows a lot of thought and planning has gone into the event."

An event planner with West Palm Beach's Shanna Abu PR, Amen Pawarlarosa says her dream party guests this season would be Oscar Wilde, Dora and her grandfather, "Kissin' Just Thru", who is no longer with us. He was a very charismatic and worldly gentleman."



THE HOSTESS: Chef Sheena Madden

The dress: Anamaria jersey dress, \$300. Fines Rhythm Clothing, CityPlace. Citrine necklace, \$895. From Nordstrom Palm Beach Gardens. Sheena is wearing her own Steve Madden shoes.

What's an easy alternative to chips and dip?

"Say cheese plates!"
"It's something that takes very little prep time. A lot of places, like Green-Wise, have an expert on site who can help you navigate the hundreds of varieties available."

"A good rule of thumb is to have a vertical or horizontal variety. You can have varieties from soft (young) to hard (aged) or a variety of, say, goat cheese from different countries or producers."

"Fresh seasonal fruits and crackers are a must have, but you can also make your own jams and candied nuts to add a personal touch."

Anything else?

"I think the most elegant and trendy thing to do nowadays, instead of traditional hors d'oeuvres, is themed 'tastings,' similar to cheese plates but with specific ingredients like different types of chocolate or artisan bread, or holiday items like figs (different types and/or different preparations)."

Let's finish with something sweet ...

"For desserts, I love a smooth, creamy *panna cotta*! Once you have a basic recipe, you can pretty much make any flavor you want. I make an eggnog flavo'r for the holidays, and when you learn a couple of plating techniques like layering, you can do combinations like cranberry and cheesecake (for a candy-cane look)."

Sheena Madden is executive chef at Mark's CityPlace and a good person to get to know ... "When friends come over, I usually prepare something really simple, but I try to give it a new twist," she says. "Having one more chef in the house (my boyfriend), our friends and family seem to request more a lot!"



THE HOSTESS: Bartender Melissa Lotero

The dress: Casting dress with graphic neckline, \$289 (shown left). Slay dress with fleur-de-lis neckline, \$258. Seasonal Whispers bracelets, \$80. From Bolide CityPlace.

Few guests will decline a cup of spiced cider or eggnog. But for hostesses who want to shake things up, Lotero suggests these festive alternatives:

CRANBERRY MARTINI
2 ounce vodka
1 ounce Godiva liqueur
1 ounce cranberry juice
1 teaspoon cranberry sauce

For each drink, shake and pour into a martini glass, then top off with a splash of Champagne.

GUINNESS COOKE SHOT
1/2 ounce Grand Marnier orange liqueur
1/2 ounce butterscotch schnapps
1/2 ounce Bailey's Irish cream liqueur

Melissa Lotero came here from Miami's South Beach and has worked as a bartender at Palm Beach's Carina. She confesses that at her own parties, she usually leaves the bartending duties to someone else.