

Sainsbury's

BIGGEST ISSUE EVER! Only £1.20

Magazine

DECEMBER 2007

All you want for Christmas

...from your favourite cooks

- ★ Jamie Oliver
- ★ Nigel Slater
- ★ Gordon Ramsay
- ★ Angela Hartnett
- ★ Rick Stein

10 SPEEDY SUPPERS

Nigella's sweet charity
'An experience I'll never forget'

Chocolate figgy pudding with white chocolate brandy sauce

WIN!
A HOLIDAY
TO SOUTH AFRICA
WORTH £8,000

BE A PARTY QUEEN

The experts show you how

Stocking thrillers

Flash a pair of perfect pins

TOP TABLES

Give your feast the wow factor

Make it magic





The entertainers: (from left to right)

Party queens

Meet the women who know how to make a party go with a bang, and pick up some expert tips for your own celebrations this Christmas

Interviews Kerry Fowler and Christina Quaine
Photographs John Reardon

LYNDY REDDING

With a track record that includes the Beckhams, Gordon Ramsay and Yasmin Le Bon, the party organiser and cordon bleu chef knows all about super-lavish entertainment.

'I trained as a chef and then started a catering company called Absolute Taste & McLaren, with Ron Dennis from the Formula One racing team. But I also wanted to get involved in party organising, so I now have a wide range of clients and can plan anything from the ultimate dinner for 10 people to huge parties for 2,500. This year we organised the wedding for England and Chelsea football captain John Terry at Blenheim Palace, and I've recently launched Gordon Ramsay by Absolute Taste – so far we've managed five events for his clients.

'We have about 40 chefs working for us and although I don't put on my chef's whites on a regular basis, I'm very involved in the menu planning and the creative side. I did a party with a tango theme for 200 people recently; we had everything specially made, right down to the tablecloths. The clients wanted people to gasp when they came into the room and with a budget of £20,000 just for the flowers, it was seriously over the top. The table was groaning so much under the weight of the flowers, we were afraid it might collapse. We also arranged Gordon Ramsay's 40th birthday party, which was really beautiful – it was based on a Renaissance theme with lots of risqué "statues" lounging around eating grapes...'

How not to do it

'I have organised parties where guests have been asked to wear all

children over for a pre-Christmas tea party. It's a tradition that started before we all had kids. Everyone would bring a little gift, whether it was a bath oil or a book, put them in a pile in the middle of the room and each of us would tear open a present.

'Nowadays, it's tea for the kids and Bellinis for the girls. I'll make the party really colourful with lots of fairy lights, mini crackers and fairy cakes. I actually enjoy it more than Christmas Day because it's a chance for me to have a good catch-up with my friends. We once invited boyfriends and husbands, but it wasn't the same! This year it'll just be the girls and children: the kids will play silly games like karaoke and musical chairs, and once the adults have had enough Bellinis, we'll join in!'

Entertaining secrets

● 'If you are setting a theme, be imaginative. Steer clear of *Grease* and *Saturday Night Fever*. The really hot celebrity party themes are casino and burlesque à la Dita Von Teese (who strutted her stuff at Jade Jagger's party). The casino/gaming theme is very popular and relatively easy to translate to private parties. You can hire a proper roulette table, buy a cheap one or just set up a simple card table to add some fun entertainment to your evening. You can even play for chips that can be cashed in for prizes for men and women.

● 'The Nigella and Jamie revolution has meant that everyone wants to cook and serve better food than 10 years ago, which is great but it has become a little competitive. Amazing as Nigella is, not everyone can get it that right. If you burn the cake slightly, drop a bottle of wine or overcook the vegetables, it doesn't matter. You don't have to be a perfect party goddess. It's great to have a go but you shouldn't lose sight of what it's all about.

● 'The trend of serving fish and chips in cones is a positive thing in terms of budget. Choose some mini dishes and lay them out buffet-style to cut down on serving.

● 'Plan your outfit days in advance and just leave your hair and make-up until last, especially if you're cooking. Go with something that will look good with a kitchen glow: a cream blusher and shimmery make-up – it's a lot safer than a matt lipstick with a flawless finish and poker straight hair. For over-the-stove-talking-to-your-friends cooking, you have to make compromises.

● 'And if there's a key to the perfect party, it is not to worry about creating the perfect party...'

How To Party: Everything you need to know about throwing a successful party by Yasmin Mills (Roostop Publishing, £12.99, available through www.amazon.co.uk). All profits go to the charity Hope & Homes for Children. Contact Yasmin at Howtoparty@aol.com.

VANESSA TEAGUE

The co-founder of Kasimira Party Organisers, along with Marina Fogle, says throwing an unforgettable party for all the right reasons is all about originality and delegating.

'When Marina and I were at university in Edinburgh, we used to make cookies and sell them to cafes around the city. This evolved into the idea of setting up a business organising children's parties in London. It was truly innovative at the time, as people were still using the kind of children's entertainers we'd had as kids. Then the parents would tell us they liked us and asked whether we



‘If you feel that your party’s atmosphere is dwindling, you need to change something, whether it’s the music or the lighting. Or you could give everyone a round of shots!’

could organise their parties. Now we do shop openings, launches and private parties. We're a very young company, which means our ideas are fresh and dynamic, and we have so much enthusiasm for what we do.

'I've just come back from an amazing 30th birthday party in Ibiza, which had an Alice in Wonderland theme with incredible go-go dancers, an electric guitarist and a DJ. Unfortunately, we didn't know about the theme until the last minute, but we managed to find an Accessorize and bought ear muffs with rabbit and heart motifs on them!

'We recently organised a mini festival for an employer who wanted to say thank you to 350 employees. They were all in the 18 to 30 age bracket, and the party lasted from 6pm until 6am. It was in a field with a marquee, fairground rides and a dressing-up room where guests could get their hair and make-up done and choose a costume to keep – the tutus were very popular with the men! Before the party, every guest had to name 15 tracks they'd like to hear and the DJ played the 10 best ones. The great thing about the party was that guests were constantly being surprised – we organised a Brazilian drum troupe, a spectacular fireworks display, cabaret acts and a survivors' photo in the morning.'

How not to do it

'Don't feel you have to do everything yourself – there's nothing worse than being a frazzled, stressed-out host. ▶