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*Cook like a chef or
just look like one!*
Treat Yourself to an
Around the Table
Chef's Apron

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or 603/526 7319

More information the web at
www.susannye.com



How do you get in the Christmas spirit? Do you gather a few friends and stroll through the neighborhood singing carols? Maybe you drive all over town to see the lights and then enjoy a special family dinner? Perhaps you head to the theater every year to see the Nutcracker? Or maybe you deck the halls and invite everyone over to celebrate the season.

Who doesn't love to get dressed up in their favorite red sweater and spend an evening, afternoon, even the morning with good friends? To that end, the month of December is filled with cookie swaps, cozy lunches, cocktail parties, potlucks and candlelit dinners. Regardless of whether you host the most elegant soiree or the most casual get-together, everyone will be delighted by your invitation.

Thanksgiving has always been my claim to fame and I've only thrown a handful of Christmas parties. But many people are famous, even world-renown for their annual Christmas party. My friend Julie is one of those. Maybe you are too.

Right now you're pulling out paper and pen and starting to make your lists. You're digging deep into the closet for your grandmother's punchbowl and into that little wooden box filled with your other grandmother's cookie recipes. All the while, your heart's not in it. The last thing you want to whip up is a bowl of your infamous eggnog. Maybe you're still feeling tuckered out from Thanksgiving; maybe you need to take a break for a year.

Or maybe, just maybe, your lethargy is telling you it's time to start some new traditions. Maybe you are bored with throwing the same old party with the same old formula. Shake things up a bit. Get rid of the quiet background music, instead rent a karaoke machine and sing carols. If you dare, record the fun and post the highlights on YouTube.

Forget the cookie swap you've been hosting for a decade or more. Hold a sledding party. At least half your friends will be grateful that they don't have to spend a day cooped up in the kitchen baking ten or twelve or more dozen cookies. The other half will be happy to bring along a dozen or so to share at the party!

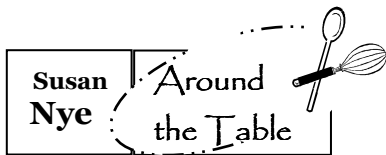
Instead of making hundreds of labor intensive hors d'oeuvres, reinvent your cocktail party by turning it into a soup fest. All it takes is a few wedges of nice cheese, some nuts, olives and maybe a yummy dip or spread to start. Then bring out two or three caldrons of warm and wonderful soup. Whether you make it yourself or order it from your favorite restaurant or caterer, everyone loves soup.

If you are one of those do-it-yourself hosts or hostesses, it could be time to think about getting some help. If your dinner parties are stuck in the '70's, a good caterer will lead you out of the doldrums with an innovative and updated menu of delicious treats. Yes, it might sting for a moment but you will be pleasantly surprised to find that none of your guests miss Nana's green Jell-O mold. And the best part, with someone else in the kitchen, you will be calm and rested for your party.

If a soup-to-nuts catered party is not in your budget this year, not to worry. Many chefs and caterers are flexible and will provide as much or as little help as you need. If all else fails, take a trip to that gourmet market you've been dying to try. Whatever you do, enjoy the holiday season and your own party with a little music, some fun, yummy dishes and good cheer!

Bon appétit!

Susan



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or just look like one!

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Smoked Salmon Mousse

*Smoked Salmon Mousse is one of my favorite cocktail party dishes. It is not only delicious,
it takes about five minutes to make; a real plus during the busy holiday season. Enjoy!*

Makes about 1 cup

8 ounces smoked salmon
2 tablespoons mayonnaise
2 tablespoons sour cream
2 tablespoons lemon juice

Pinch cayenne pepper

Crackers and/or toasted baguette slices

Cucumbers, cut into wedges

Garnish: freshly ground black pepper, caviar or salmon roe and finely chopped chives

In a food processor fitted with steel blade, process the fish until fine. Add the mayonnaise, sour cream, lemon juice and cayenne pepper and process for 30 seconds. Taste for seasoning.

Spoon into a small serving bowl and garnish with caviar or salmon roe and chives. Serve with crackers and/or toasted baguette slices and cucumber wedges.

Can be made ahead and kept up to 1 day in the refrigerator. Remove from refrigerator 1/2 hour before serving.