



jazz up your holiday this year

TIRED OF THE SAME OLD PARTY THEMES? TRY THESE TO SPRUCE UP YOUR FETE.

Host a holiday "hen" party (roosters welcome). Serve deviled eggs, chick pea spread from Worldwide Food, and chicken fajitas or chicken quesadillas with plenty of do-it-yourself condiments. Go all out and get those wonderful clay chickens from La Mariposa on Henderson and stand place cards in front of them for a clucking happy table. Put Rue One's Hen Soap with little, egg-shaped ones to tuck under it in your powder room. Dare your company to dance *The Chicken* or prompt a philosophical discussion of which came first.

Throw a gingerbread party for grown-ups (and bring the kids along). Sheila Etzkorn, artist, and Ruth Anderson, founder of Wearartists (women who design wearable art and accessories) invite their crafty friends to bring a selection of edible decorating materials to a gingerbread party. They bake giant gingerbread girls from a *Joy of Cooking* recipe, make quick-drying, unsticky icing, and provide tea and wassail. If it's a family affair, let children have their own table with gingerbread boys (to be perfectly fair) and offer prizes for creativity. Guests have a ball trying to outdo one another. One gingerbread girl is transformed into a Victorian lady, another into a Gauguin-inspired South Seas islander, complete with Hershey kiss peeking out from a colorful sarong. Fruit roll-ups are cut with pinking shears to make a fringed skirt, red licorice whips are braided for hair. A guest who's a therapist from Timberlawn brings all leftovers to her patients for their Christmas party.

Put on the dog with a red and gold party. Take a gold, spray-painted basket to The Great Harvest Bread Co.—they'll fill it with a variety of sliced breads for your holiday table. Serve brie with strawberries, Scandinavian shrimp with Russian dressing, and Duffy's mushroom tartlets (see recipes at left). Serve champagne in ruby

red flutes from Crate & Barrel. Place poinsettias everywhere. Put goldfish in bowls and give them to guests as they leave. Use your best china or, for fun, tin plates—Sticks & Stones carries ritzy copies of 18th century Sevres porcelain designs. If you have a piano, you must hire fabulous pianist Mark Carroll, back now from his stint in Palm Beach. If you've no ivories to tickle, have guests listen to the wonderful CD of Sting and Pavarotti singing "Panis Angelicus" or any Andrea Bocelli album.

Count down to the real millennium. Send out digital invitations, then follow up with e-mails every day for 10 days before the party. Serve shots of chilled, flavored vodka such as Grey Goose carried by Centennial Liquor in Highland Park Village. The bottles themselves are conversation pieces. Get Elton 2000 Pure White Gel candles designed by Laura Slatkin at Stanley Korshak. Suitably spacey looking, they burn better than wax or paraffin and leave no residue. Challenge your guests to predict where Nasdaq will be, who'll be at the top of the charts, if extraterrestrial life will be discovered, how many people will be using eBay, and what the price of cigarettes will be next New Year's Eve. Music? Play the soundtrack from, what else, *2001*.

Give a "get out of the cold" pre-Super Bowl party with electric blankets, fondue over open flame, hot spiced tea from Two Sisters, Red Stripe beer from Goody's, and Leal's Salsa Festiva from Muleshoe, Texas. The Leal family started a tortilla factory back in the '50s, then opened a restaurant, then another, then, you get the picture. Finally they're bottling their sensational salsa and it's available at Minyard's. Be forewarned: "Mild" is hot, "Original" is hotter, "Hot" is a pistol-packin' mama. Keep the party sizzling with tunes from Enrique Iglesias. **D**

RECIPES FOR A RED AND GOLD PARTY

Brie topped with strawberries

Procure an excellent ripe brie from your favorite cheese purveyor. Slice cheese and place on a Pepperidge Farm Trio's cracker or French bread round. Top it with a slice of fresh strawberry.

Scandinavian shrimp bowl with Russian dressing

Cook three pounds of large shrimp in shells. Cool under running water. Peel and devein shrimp. Marinate in 1½ cups tarragon vinegar, juice of one lemon, one teaspoon fresh thyme, several sprigs of fresh dill, dash of cayenne, and salt and pepper to taste. Refrigerate for two hours. Drain and drape shrimp over edge of cut glass bowl filled with ice into which is nestled another glass bowl filled with Russian dressing (or combine ½ cup of mayonnaise with ¼ cup of Marie's Thousand Island dressing for a delicious, creamy dip).

Duffy's wild mushroom tartlets

Preheat oven to 350. Slowly melt four tablespoons unsalted butter in frying pan. Sauté one cup chopped onions until lightly browned, then add ½ pound finely chopped wild mushrooms. Be careful to shake the pan, so mushrooms don't singe, and cook until liquid is absorbed. Mince a clove of garlic and add. Stir in one cup of heavy cream; reduce until thickened. Add 1½ teaspoons curry powder and salt and pepper to taste. Spoon mixture into mini phyllo dough shells (thawed) such as those made by Athens (15 to a box). Bake for 10 minutes at 350. Serve topped with a sprig of fresh parsley.