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I do, take two

The etiquette of encore weddings

By RAMY RENGE

In our modern, fractured times, encore weddings make up about 40 percent of all the weddings taking place around the country. Although it may be the second (or third) time for you, it is the very first time you and your new spouse-to-be are getting married, and so there is really nothing second-hand about the occasion. The encore wedding provides an opportunity to personalize the occasion and plan a more intimate event that reflects the unique relationship of the new couple. In an encore wedding, it is likely that the couple will have an equal hand in planning the ceremony, stressing simplicity and enjoyment.

Says James Campistrous of J-Angelo event planning in Milford, PA, “the encore bride arrives at the planning session with a single page of paper separated into two columns. One column (usually the shortest) denotes what she ‘does’ want her wedding to include and the other longer list is the items that she ‘doesn’t’ want included... I am rarely asked if there is a protocol for encore weddings. Most brides could care less what should be done, and they are less concerned about what others will think of their choices. The guest list is usually much more intimate than first-time weddings, maxing out at 70 or 80 guests. The encore [couple] visualize [their] wedding as a great party filled with laughter and everyone having an enjoyable time.”

Attire

The great thing about what to wear for an encore wedding is: anything goes. At this stage, you probably have a good idea of what sorts of clothes are flattering to you and what you feel comfortable in. It is perfectly acceptable for a second-time bride to wear white, and for her groom to dress in a tuxedo. However, there are many

who will choose a less formal look—something sophisticated and muted that highlights the maturity and taste of the couple rather than formality and purity. Where you have your wedding will help you decide what to wear. If you are getting married in your back yard or by a lake, your attire will be more flowing and less formal than if you are planning an evening wedding in a formal hall. Many encore brides choose a simple, elegant style such as a floor-length evening sheath or a tailored cocktail suit. You can also go for ankle- and tea-length dresses, dressy pantsuits or vintage dresses. To slim and trim your figure, choose dresses that are cut on the bias, have A-lines and feature high, draped or V-shaped necklines.



Setting

Again, where you choose to be married is a personal choice: there is no right or wrong. Pick a place that is affordable and meaningful for you, and to which your family and friends can comfortably attend.



Invitations

Invitations can be personalized and generally are sent out from the couple, as in: “Susan and Sam invite you to share their joy...” The artistic among you might want to create your own with a watercolor or photographic design, or you may consider using a local print company that specializes in wedding invitations.

Children

Three-fourths of second-time weddings involve children. There are many roles a child can play in your encore wedding, depending on their age and desire. It is important to recognize that such an event will bring up many complicated feelings in your children and the children of your fiancé. They are being asked to change the family shape they are used to, which may cause apprehension. They might feel torn between the remarried parent and the other parent, afraid that feeling joy at the

occasion will constitute betrayal. Communication is key, and encouraging your children to express their misgivings will go a long way toward clearing the air.

Young children will enjoy being flower girls or ring bearers. Older children can act as ushers, bringing guests to their seats. Teens might like the role of being attendants and junior attendants. Older children can help with many aspects of the wedding, including planning, cooking and decorating. It may be appropriate to include your children in the ceremony itself, by asking for a family blessing, having the kids light a candle or recite a special prayer, poem or story.



Food and Wedding Cake

You may choose to have the affair catered, or you may do some of the cooking yourself. You can even have a pot luck gathering for an informal wedding. Rather than go with a traditional white cake, why not choose a fun and trendy flavor such as carrot, nut, banana or sponge with fruit. Look for a local baker who can customize your cake as you like it.

Music

Live music makes a great personal statement, and a small string quartet or chamber ensemble will lend an air of warmth and sophistication to the event, especially if it is an afternoon or outdoor affair. It is even possible to incorporate some quiet guitar or classical music into the ceremony itself, or to have a singer render a meaningful wedding song. Of course, for the old rockers among you, a live rock band is perfect for dancing at the reception or a DJ who knows all of the songs of your era and how to put them together to let your guests kick up their heels.

Flowers

Flowers are a part of any wedding, and how you put them together is up to you. Coordinate your floral decorations with the season, and incorporate as many natural elements as possible. You can create your own simple arrangements with candles, cut flowers, wild flowers and leaves, small branches painted white or other colors, berries, evergreen, pine cones, sea shells and so on.

Or, use the services of a local gardener to get the effect you want. Some gardeners in the area will even work with you to grow specific blooms for your wedding bouquet and decorative touches.



Photography

You can certainly hire a photographer to take formal pictures at your encore wedding, but in this digital age, there are no doubt many among your friends and family that are handy with a camera or video camera and can record the event for you. Black and white photography is "in" these days, as are video recordings with a loose, documentary feel, featuring mini-interviews, candid scenes and an all-around good-time feel.



Gifts

It is totally appropriate to expect and accept gifts at a second wedding, but the type of gifts that you desire might change. Many couples that are marrying again are joining their households, and they already have more table settings and casserole dishes than they know what to do with. Fine art, pottery, a specially crafted lamp or mirror are wonderful touches that will mark the beginning of your lives together. Many couples choose to donate wedding money to a charity, and an easy way to do this is just put a large jar out at the wedding party for donations to the charity you identify.

Favors

There are lots of ideas out there for unusual and interesting favors for your guests. Practical items such as edible chocolate or small bread loaves will be welcome, and a really nice idea is to give each guest a small herb plant in a nice container. Coffee mugs with a small bag of coffee, or twin mini-bottles of wine, will be a welcome keepsake of your affair. Rather than focusing on the union of the new couple, favors at an encore wedding can emphasize the friendship and community that others bring to the celebration.

Go green

Whenever possible, use real silverware and plates instead of paper or Styrofoam. Be sure to have large identifiable containers set aside for recyclables. Visit the farmers markets for locally produced foods and flowers for cooking and decorating. Be sure to include vegetarian entries on your menu. Invitations can be printed on tree-free or 100 percent recycled paper. Include an RSVP postcard that will not need an envelope. Wedding rings can be made from recycled precious metals and stones, or re-visioned from vintage pieces or family heirlooms.

And whenever possible, remember to use everything local when it comes to vendors, servers and craftspeople within your local community in creating your wedding celebration.



COME TO THE TABLE

You're invited to the fundraising event of the season

By LORI MALONE

"We help families have the difficult conversations and find equitable resolution," said Kathy Kreiter, agency director of the Dispute Resolution Center (DRC) established in 1982 as the Orange County Mediation Project. Changing their name in 1993 to its current moniker, the organization continued to grow and expand its services. In 2002, the DRC contracted with the New York State Unified Court System to provide mediation services for Sullivan and Ulster counties. The not-for-profit organization's objective is to provide no- or low-cost mediation services that include custody and visitation, family and divorce, landlord/tenant, neighbor/neighbor and lemon law arbitration to the community. Beyond the core mediation program, the DRC also provides parenting education, peer mediation programs in schools, family group conferencing and a crisis intervention hotline.

When asked about her successes and challenges, "confidentiality is key," said Kreiter. "Even a vague account may be misconstrued as a breach." She did reveal that those that utilize her agency's services are usually in some personal crisis or turmoil. In many cases the organization provides that light at the end of the tunnel and for some, it is their only resource.

In spite of all the good work it does, raising community awareness about the invaluable services the DRC provides is still challenging. As a not-for-profit organization under the constraints of limited funding, the DRC needed to be creative.

In April 2006, Kreiter, her small staff and a handful of devoted volunteers beckoned all to "Come to the table," however, not in its usual context of mediation, but in the form of a tableware auction and cocktail party.

"We had the good fortune of having really talented people participate that first year—Steve Wilkinson, Ruby Gold, Sandra Gerry, Carolyn Massey, Barbara Sush—I could go on and on," said Kreiter about the inaugural event. It was so well received that by year two it moved to a larger venue and extended bid-



Contributed photos

"Meals make memories" was the theme of Sue Bunce's table voted Most Cultural at last year's event.

ding from its Friday evening soiree, which attracts prominent business leaders, lawyers, judges and legislators, to a Saturday open house, allowing anyone interested in the opportunity to see and bid on the gorgeous table designs.

"We had 27 tables in 2007," said Kreiter. "We hope to have at least that many this year."

The tables are comprised of four or more complete settings that include dishes, stemware, flatware, linens and a centerpiece. Some table packages include event tickets, DVDs, wine and other incentives that support the table's theme and enhance its presentation. Celebrity judges from the area award prizes to the designers in the categories of Best Use of Theme, Most Cultural, Most Artistic, Most Elegant, Most Original, Most Whimsical, Judge's Choice and People's Choice.

"Ms. Kreiter, her small staff and a handful of devoted volunteers beckoned all to 'Come to the table,' however, not in its usual context of mediation..."

Not all tables are designed by design professionals. Many businesses and organizations use this event as a way to promote themselves, encouraging those who spend their days crunching numbers and pushing papers to unleash the creative diva inside them. "I won Most Cultural last year," said Sue Bunce, Program Director for Big Apple Central Intake Program. "My table, 'Meals make memories,' was in memory of my mom, who had Alzheimer's. She was Hungarian and everyone loved her home cooking. My table design included a menu for a traditional Hungarian meal, Magyar folk designs, wine and a Hungarian cookbook."

Every table has a story—its theme. For many, a great deal of time and consideration go into executing their vision. It cannot just be pretty; these arrangements need to be useful to those that bid on and win them. These table designs must appeal to someone's sense of style, sentiment, romance or

whimsy. The professional designers in attendance last year took their table creations to new heights—in one case, quite literally. James Campistrous of J-Angelo events planning in Milford, PA, created a five-foot tower of toys and tulle with his children's party table that was chockfull of whimsy. New York City designer Kyriaki Vlachopoulou created a spring theme that included handcrafted earthenware set on a table of cut grass under a canopy of pink apple blossoms. Tobi Magnetico, artist in residence at Kristt Company in Monticello, NY, used tin speckleware, bandanas, wooden crates and bottles of Jack Daniels to illustrate her vision of "Tramp Art." Homage to "girls just want to have fun" was an explosion of pink frill from the creative mind of Lori Rubinstein-Fleck, CEO of RubyFlecks Creative Consulting and this year's event co-chair.

"This event is a great opportunity for me to reach out to the community and help make a difference," said Rubinstein-Fleck. She, along with the DRC's staff and more than 20 volunteers, has been toiling away since November to organize the event. With the support of **The River Reporter**, Watermark Communications, Bold Gold Media and other sponsors, organizers anticipate a highly successful outcome.

Come to the Table will take place Friday, April 25 and Saturday April 26 at the Frontier Building in Rock Hill, NY. The auction will commence at the Preview Party that will also feature the Design Awards presentation and a champagne Diamond Pendant raffle. WSUL's Anika Sonic will serve as mistress of ceremony. Saturday's event offers attendees a Taste of the County, featuring wine, cheese and chocolate, all available for purchase; live demonstrations; prizes; special guests "Kings in the Kitchen;" and master of ceremony Paul Ciliberto, courtesy of Thunder 102.

To find out more or to get involved, e-mail Kathy Kreiter, Agency Director, Dispute Resolution Center, at kathyk@drcservices.org or call 845/794-3377.



NYC designer Kyriaki Vlachopoulou's spring-inspired entry.



"Tramp Art," created by Tobi Magnetico, artist in residence at Kristt Company won most artistic table last year.



James Campistrous, of J-Angelo events, received an award for this whimsical creation.

Creating an inviting table

Any occasion can be made more memorable when infused with personal touches and creative flare. When hosting a casual dinner, luncheon or brunch your table setting doesn't have to follow strict table setting guidelines. You can veer from tradition and place utensils inside a glass or bundled with a napkin. A knife slipped into the tongs of a fork and placed diagonally on a large plate is very dramatic and quite acceptable.



Illustration by Lori Malone

Casual Place Setting

Here is an example of a proper place setting; notice that the fork is to the left of the plate with the napkin underneath, the knife (with its blade facing the plate) and the spoon are placed on the right. The water goblet or glass is placed above the spoon and knife. The bread plate is optional—however, should you include it, the butterknife should be placed on top of the bread plate as illustrated.

Tips

- 1) Press your tablecloth and napkins—they are the foundation of an inviting table.
- 2) Cloth napkins are best; however, if your party is more casual you may use paper napkins if they are of good quality.
- 3) Do not crowd your guests. Each guest should have enough elbowroom to move freely—18-20 inches between place settings should be adequate.
- 4) Be sure your dining chairs are sturdy and comfortable. Secure wobbly legs and add seat cushions to hard surfaces.
- 5) Do not block your guests' view of each other with an oversized centerpiece. Use a low arrangement no higher than a champagne flute or wine glass. Flowers are great, but fruit, vegetables, herbs and grasses arranged in an interesting vessel are a nice alternative. Use one centerpiece on round and square tables and two, spaced evenly apart, on an oblong or rectangle table.
- 6) Votive candles, pillars and tapers help set the mood for evening dinner parties. Do not use scented candles; the scent may alter the taste of the meal.
- 7) Lighting is key. If you do not have a dimmer switch in your dining room, you should consider installing one.
- 8) If you have a mirror in your dining room, position it at a slight downward angle to reflect the table.
- 9) Plan how your food is to be served—family style, in courses or set on a buffet. Remember—presentation is very important, so transfer food into attractive serving pieces before setting it onto your table or buffet.

Tickets for two

The river valley delivers on a rich lineup of cultural events

By TOM KANE

We come to the Upper Delaware River valley for lots of reasons. We come for the beautiful scenery, the forests, mountains, lakes, rivers and streams. We come for the relatively clean air and unpopulated hillsides. We come for the chance to take a hike or a bike ride. We come to fish for trout in the tributaries, canoe down the Delaware or spot a bald eagle. We come for peace and quiet, for a chance to turn off our cell phones (which, in many parts of our region, will not work anyway) and tune in to simpler times. But... culture?

The fact is, there is plenty of thriving culture here, and as our region grows, more is making the scene every day.

From cutting-edge drama to community opera to chamber music to Main Street galleries, there is something for all ages and tastes. Shows, exhibitions, concerts and film series are generously spread throughout our towns and villages and, in season, there are many arts, craft and music festivals to add spice to your weekend. Generally, attire is casual, but the presentation and quality of the performance or show is refreshingly professional.

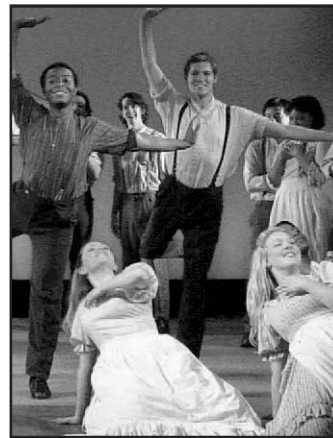
In planning your cultural outing, be sure to visit one of the local restaurants before or after the event to round out your afternoon or evening. You will feel good about every part of your adventure: from seeing some great grassroots art to knowing you have supported your local artists and contributed to the enhancement of the growing cultural richness of the area.

Listed here are a number of cultural destinations in the Upper Delaware River valley. Also, be on the lookout for the many seasonal music and arts festivals celebrated in the region, such as the Honesdale Roots 'n Rhythm Music & Arts Festival in June, the Digit film festival coming to Narrowsburg in June, RiverFest, a mid-summer Narrowsburg tradition and the Wildflower Music Festival held at the Dorflinger-Suydam Wildlife Sanctuary in White Mills, PA.

There are many more besides, and you may find your own special cultural haunt in your neck of these beautiful woods.



TRR file photos



Contributed by Delaware Valley Arts Alliance

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The Red Eft Gallery
159 Sullivan Street
Wurtsboro, NY
www.redeftgallery.com

Offers shows by professional artists and holds art classes for children and adults.

The Wayne County Arts Alliance
742 Main Street, Suite 201
Honesdale, PA
570/253-6850

www.waynecountyartsalliance.org

A not-for-profit organization that showcases area artists and facilitates workshops, tours and other events in the area.

Catskill Art Society Gallery
48 Main Street
Livingston Manor, NY
845/436-422

www.catskillartsociety.org

A not-for-profit organization that exhibits the work of established and emerging artists, holds classes and workshops and other community events.

Delaware Valley Arts Alliance
PO Box 170, Main Street
Narrowsburg, NY

845/252-7576

www.artsalliancesite.org

A not-for-profit organization that hosts regular gallery openings, literary events, films, grant opportunities for artists and Riverfest, an annual arts and environment street fair in July.

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Tuesday Evening Film Series:
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Delaware Valley Arts Alliance
Narrowsburg, NY
845/252-7506

www.artsalliancesite.org

Shows movies about love in the technocratic age, Tuesdays in March and April.

Smiles of a Winter Night film series
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Catskill Arts Society
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www.catskillartsociety.org

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www.dv-opera.org

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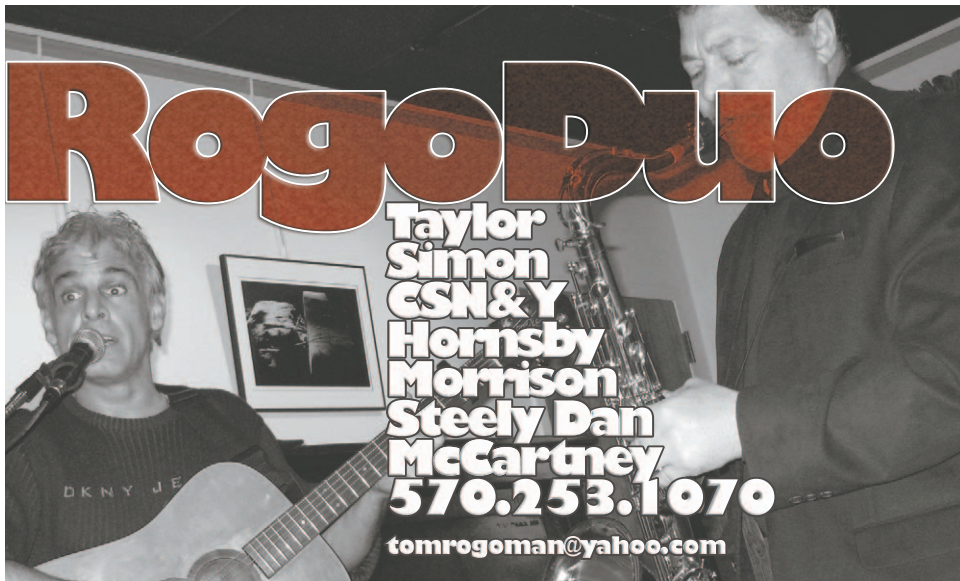
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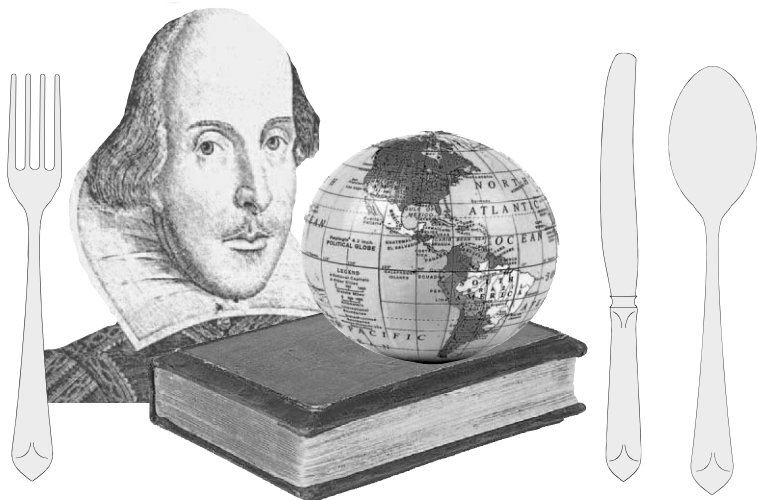
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Guess who's coming to dinner?

Fresh ideas for throwing a themed gathering

By **RAMY RENGE**

Creating a themed dinner or cocktail party can be a creative and satisfying venture. We are all familiar with the idea of throwing a party around a certain decade, such as the '50s, '60s, '70s or '80s, with appropriate decorations, pop culture icons, costumes and music. Just a bit of research will give you fresh ideas into how to make such "time travel" gatherings interesting and new. For example, you might decide to center your party around a movie or television show, or Broadway play, such as "West Side Story" or "All in the Family."

All the world's a stage

Another fresh idea is to plan a literary dinner party, where everyone shows up as a favorite literary character or author. A variation on this theme might be to host a Shakespearean party on Shakespeare's birthday (which is in the month of April) when everyone shows up as a character from a Shakespearean play. Decorations would include lots of candles, of course, as well as crests, crowns, flags and other Elizabethan or outdoor-theatre-style stuff. Various guests could play the part of the joker or the bard, juggling or going from group to group with a song or a poem. Period music will help create an authentic atmosphere. Other things to keep in mind to create an aura of authenticity are that guests generally sat at benches; chairs were for nobility and important people. Food was consumed from wooden bowls using spoons or fingers. Salt was highly prized, and a bowl of salt usually resided at the head of the table. Meat was a rarity, and most of the common population got by with grains and vegetables.

Nevertheless, during the Elizabethan era, the British Empire was beginning to plant its seeds in other parts of the world, and exotic food stuffs were making their way back to England, including marmalades, jellies, curds, marzipans and spiced nuts. Dishes such as Yorkshire Pudding, Steak and Kidney Pie or Shephard's Pie will be a hit, preceded by Barley Fruit Soup (recipe follows) and thick breads with orange or lemon marmalade and bowls of spiced peanuts or cashews. Top off the evening with a rich version of the classic Olde English trifle (see recipe).

Variations on an arty dinner party theme might be to host a William Butler Yeats birthday party in June with "everything Irish," or a Bob Dylan birthday party in May, or a Beatles celebration—anytime. Art, music, authors, movies, plays—you are limited only by your imagination.

Barley Fruit Soup

8 cups chicken broth
½ cup dried apricots, cut in pieces
½ cup apples, peeled and cubed
1 cup peas
¼ cup barley
salt to taste
ginger powder to taste

Simmer chicken broth, apricots and apples for 45 minutes. Add peas and barley and simmer another 15 minutes. Add spices to taste and serve.

English Trifle

Adapted from "The Silver Palate Good Times Cookbook" recipe, "Olde English Trifle."
Makes 10-12 servings

A creamy, rich, British dessert layered in a glass bowl and traditionally served at Christmas time.

1 pound cake (your own or store bought)
½ cup seedless raspberry jam
1 cup coarsely broken Amaretti (about 16 cookies)
¼ cup Triple Sec (or other liquor such as Grand Marnier or Amaretto)
2 packages (3.125 oz) vanilla pudding/pie filling
4 cups milk
2 teaspoons vanilla extract

2 cups heavy or whipping cream, cold
3 tablespoons confectioners' sugar
½ teaspoon almond extract
¾ cup toasted sliced almonds
Fresh berries for garnish

Cut the cake into ¼-inch slices and spread out flat on a surface to dry for several hours. Spread a thin layer of the jam on half the cake slices. Top with the remaining cake slices. Cut the cake sandwiches into 1-inch cubes and scatter in a large glass bowl.

Add the Amaretti crumbs and toss together. Sprinkle with the Triple Sec and toss to coat.

Prepare the pudding mixes, using the milk, according to package directions. Remove from heat and whisk in the vanilla. Let cool completely.

Pour half the cooled custard over the cake mixture.

Whip the cream in a chilled bowl until soft peaks form. Beat in the confectioners' sugar and almond extract and continue beating until stiff. Spoon half of the whipped cream over the top of the custard. Layer the remaining half of the custard over the whipping cream. Add a second layer of whipped cream decoratively over the top of the custard.

Scatter the almonds over the top. Refrigerate, covered with plastic wrap, until ready to serve, up to 3 days.

Spoon the trifle into glass bowls and

Mangia!

garnish with fresh fruit.

A popular and relatively easy way to host a themed dinner party is to choose a geographical region and culture, such as Mexico, China, Greece or Italy. This involves costumes, food and drink typical to the region, decorations and perhaps some games characteristic of the country. Such parties can be tasteful and low-key rather than campy and cheap, emphasizing the graceful and authentic aspects of the culture whenever possible. For example, for a Rustic Italian-themed dinner, create an outdoor setting with wooden benches and potted herbs. Place bowls of olives here and there. Serve Italian wine in low tumblers or juice glasses to create a rustic feel, and serve Grappa as an apertif. Play Italian folk music or opera

for atmosphere. Menu choices are immense, of course, and you can begin with a choice appetizer such as Grilled Antipasto with Mezza Soprano sauce (see recipe) accompanied by a cheese board with Italian cheeses such as Asiago, Grana Padano, and Rustico with Black Pepper. Serve cheeses with sliced rustic Italian bread.

The main course could include Chicken or Veal Saltimbocca, or a seafood dish such as Calamari in Zimino, along with pasta and sauce (or "gravy"), polenta with Parmesan and an orange, fennel and celery salad with black olives (see recipe). For dessert, try Tiramisu, always a crowd pleaser, topped off with Fernet Branca, the traditional Italian digestive drink.

Grilled Antipasto with Mezzo Soprano Sauce

Mezzo Soprano Sauce

6 anchovy fillets, drained and finely minced
4 cloves garlic, finely minced
1 tablespoon capers, drained and coarsely chopped
¾ cup extra-virgin olive oil
Sea salt

Combine the anchovies, garlic and capers in a small bowl or a food processor. Slowly whisk in the olive oil and season further with salt, if desired. Set aside.

Vegetables

2 small sweet potatoes, peeled and each cut into 4 long slices
4 medium zucchini, each cut into 4 long slices
2 small radicchio, cut into quarters
1 medium eggplant, cut into 4 long slices; then each slice cut in half, widthwise
3 small bunches of green onions, trimmed
½ cup olive oil
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 pint small, ripe cherry tomatoes, tossed in a bowl with a little oil
1 lemon, cut into wedges

Lightly coat cut vegetables with oil and sprinkle with salt. One by one, lay the vegetable slices and green onions on the grill, over direct medium heat. (Do this in batches if necessary so the grill is not crowded.) Cook about 5 minutes. Turn and cook 3 or 4 minutes longer. Remove tender vegetables from grill and transfer to a platter. (Note: zucchini, radicchio and green onions will cook fairly quickly; the eggplant will take a little longer and the sweet potatoes will be the last to cook through). Coat warm vegetables with Soprano Sauce to taste. Let cool to room temperature and coat again if necessary.

Last, place the tomatoes onto the cooking grate to mark and warm through, about 2 minutes. Coat with Soprano Sauce and place onto the platter with the other vegetables. Decorate with lemon wedges and serve at room temperature.

Orange, Fennel and Celery Salad with Black Olives

(Serves 5 or 6)

2 large fennel bulbs, trimmed, cored, and very thinly sliced
4 small oranges (2 blood and 2 regular is ideal), peeled of all skin and white pith and cut into thin rounds
1 celery heart, chopped, plus a handful of celery leaves left whole
Salt
Freshly ground black pepper
1/3 cup of high-grade extra-virgin olive oil
A handful of black Niçoise olives

Choose a large white platter. Place the fennel in the center of the platter and spread it out. Place the orange slices on top in a circular pattern. Add the celery. Refrigerate until ready to serve.

When ready to serve, season well with salt and black pepper, scatter on the celery leaves, add the black olives, and drizzle with olive oil.

‘Every day is Earth Day’ picnic

Now that the days are lengthening and warming, its time to get the family outside. Food served and eaten outside is always a special treat, and the backyard or a nearby park is the perfect setting to involve the kids in a celebration of green living and sustainability. This is a great way to celebrate Earth Day, but really any time is the right time to plan an eco-friendly picnic.

Begin with a trip to the farmers market to buy an organic bird for fried chicken. While you are there, you can buy ingredients for salads and sides. The markets often have yummy cookies, chocolate and pies for dessert, too.

Pack your picnic basket with real plates and cutlery, including real napkins. Don’t forget a nice tablecloth or blanket to use on the ground or picnic table. The goal, which can be turned into a game, is to leave nothing behind, not even in the trash barrel. This means you will have to pack drinks in a thermos or jar. Lavender Lemonade is a perfect summer choice (see recipe, below). Your kids (and you, too) will see how easy it is to transport just what is needed for a comfortable setting.

A bouquet of fresh local or wildflowers is the perfect cheerful touch to your picnic.

Allow your very young youngsters to bring their stuffed animals along, as children often learn well by “teaching”



others. It will also add to the fun and atmosphere to have a few teddy bears and tigers in attendance.

Once the food has been eaten, engage your kids with a Nature Treasure Hunt (see below), giving clues to natural objects such as acorns, fallen pine branches, stones and leaves. You can also engage children in collecting natural objects for art projects, or using recycled objects such as paper bags, coffee cans or oatmeal containers (both of which make great drums). Perhaps a nature hike to a special spot, such as a stream, will top off a wonderful afternoon. Kids also love to look for “clues” to their wild neighbors, such as nests, tracks and so on. Encourage kids to keep a nature notebook that can include pressed flowers and leaves, pictures taken with a disposable camera, written descriptions, drawings and more. Let your kids display three-dimensional objects in a display case or keep them in their own decorated cardboard nature box.

Nature Treasure Hunt clues

- Find something wet.
- Look for something that is moving fast.
- Find something green.
- Find something that has branches but no leaves.
- Find something hard.
- Find something brown.
- Look for something orange.
- Find something that floats.
- Find something pointy.
- Look for something with cracks.
- Find something a deer could eat.
- Look for something a bird could eat.
- Find something with thorns.
- Find something slippery.
- Look for something soft.
- Find something put here by people.

Lavender Lemonade

5 cups water
1 ½ cups sugar
12 stems fresh lavender
2 cups freshly squeezed lemon juice

Boil half the water with all the sugar to create a simple syrup. Add lavender stems and remove from heat, letting the lavender steep for 10 to 15 minutes.

Strain the lavender-infused syrup with a sieve into a mixture of the remaining water and lemon juice. Pour over crushed ice and garnish with a lavender blossom.

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