

Better Homes and Gardens®

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Celebrate the Season

Poinsettias

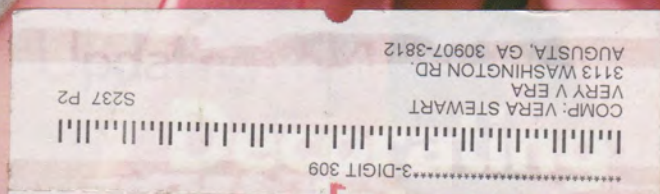
New colors
and fun ideas

Christmas Cookies

Personalized
for friends

Holiday Lights

Candles for
all occasions



traditions

PROFILE

SMALL PLATES
BIG FUN

San Francisco business partners Bibby Gigniliat and Shannan Bishop have put a new spin on supper clubs. Together, the childhood friends from Chicago operate Gourmet Gatherings, which helps novice chefs conquer dinner party stage fright.

With a team of chefs and event planners to help, the duo stages hands-on cooking class parties for groups of six to 60 people. "If you throw a dinner party and get your guests involved in the creation of the food, the more ownership they'll have. And the more ownership, the more memories," says Bibby.

Tapas parties provide all of the fun—with less of the fuss associated with more formal, sit-down dinner parties. "Tapas—a diverse assortment of appetizers—is grown-up finger food," says Shannan. The key is to provide enough food, with enough substance, to give guests the feeling they've had a full meal. Here are three easy combinations that the pair guarantee guests will love: On a tray, arrange dates, slices of prosciutto, and almonds. Or, try laying out sundried tomatoes, olives, and caper berries (or roasted red peppers). A final suggestion: Set out a pot of quince paste (or apricot jam), surrounded by manchego cheese and crackers.

Bibby and Shannan always send guests home with printed recipes of the dishes they've helped to create. Gourmet Gatherings, www.gourmetgatherings.com or 415/437-9977.

"IT'S NO SECRET PEOPLE LOVE TO HANG OUT IN THE KITCHEN, AND A HOLIDAY TAPAS PARTY GIVES THEM REASON TO STAY AND PLAY THERE." SHANNAN BISHOP



Nostalgic Sweets: If there's no time for holiday baking, but relatives are expecting the usual star turn from your kitchen, send these modern takes on holiday classics. The brilliant red velvet cake is based on a pound cake recipe, so it's as dense in flavor and texture as it is in color. Shortbread cookies can be personalized with edible ink. Red Velvet Layer Cake, \$50, Very Vera; 800/500-8372 or www.veryvera.com. Christmas Card Cookies, \$15.95, Byrd Cookie Company; 800/291-2973 or www.byrdcookiecompany.com.

