



From left to right: Tiny Victorian sorbet fruits served in ice bowls prepared by Susan Lawrence Gourmet

BY VANESSA WAKEMAN

It's January and you are sticking with your resolution to maintain a healthful lifestyle. Your snack stash in the kitchen cabinet has been discarded and the fruit bowl runneth over. Sugar has been replaced with Splenda and you have renewed your health club membership. You are confident... until you think about all of the events that you will be attending throughout the course of the year. It's almost impossible to resist palate-pleasing butler-passed trays and decadent desserts. Twenty anxious minutes and two scoops of Häagen-Dazs later, you panic at the thought of skipping some of the events you so look forward to, or worse, mindlessly indulging in all the wrong foods. What's a socialite hostess to do?

The good news is that caterers are incorporating more health-conscious options into their party menus. With the holidays being a time of indulgence and sometimes over-indulgence, there is no time like January to implement some changes. Healthful food doesn't have to mean the bland stuff of yesteryear. Whether you are attending a grand affair or planning one of your own, you can have your cake and eat it, too!

Speaking with local experts made me very hungry, but also confirmed a secret that I've known all along—it's all about the presentation. Eating is such a visual experience, if the food looks good, even hearty, healthful fare will be well received. Healthful menus can give you an opportunity to exercise your creative muscles!

Healthful Entertaining at Home

Planning a healthy dinner party at home? I spoke with **Mark Kramer**, owner and chef of Susan Lawrence Gourmet Foods, who told me that one of his cardinal rules is presentation, presentation, presentation; he believes that as long as the food is "delicious and beautiful," guests will enjoy it. He suggests that healthful food options should receive equal billing with their full-calorie brethren. Kramer effortlessly rattles off menu ideas for a small gathering at home that will be both healthful and still keep guests wanting seconds. As a main course, he suggests grilled salmon medallions with a thin band of prosciutto in a low-fat aioli sauce, accompanied by a winter salad of endives, pea shoots, mache, and caramelized walnuts in truffle vinaigrette.

And for your hors d'oeuvres, do stay away from the puff pastry and substitute pan-seared tuna in a nori rice roll or BBQ pulled pork on a wonton crisp. And if you're channeling Oprah, then you must offer Kramer's signature rice paper spring rolls served with a Thai dipping sauce. Oprah sampled them at a private affair and absolutely loved them!

Healthy Spirits

Before you run off to plan your party or purchase tickets for the next gala, wait one second. You're almost done; you now have tons of choices to consider for your menu, but what about the cocktails? Alcoholic beverages are loaded with calories—so what are your options?

Go back to our presentation rule! Create specialty bars with exciting drinks that are low in calories and high in popularity. Those who care to indulge in traditional drinks can do so, but give guests options. Create a juice bar where guests can grab a shot of carrot, ginger, or beet juice. Or a spritzer bar where wine spritzers are served with a dash of this or that for color. Fruit and flowers also add visual impact to cocktails. Serve signature drink throughout the event to tie into the theme. Bold colors, odd glassware or drinking vessels, anything smoking or on fire will keep people marveling.

So, as you go from event to event this year your resolutions will be your realities and you'll still have great times on the go! **WAF**

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