

What's Cookin': Relax as a dinner party host

A few weeks ago, we were invited for dinner to our friends' home (Brenda and Gary Roffel). Although we've never had dinner there before, I knew from the reports my son brought home (our kids Michael and Brendan are great friends) that she's an excellent cook and he is a barbecuer supreme—so we knew we were in store for something delicious!

The appetizers you see here today are Brenda's recipe—very easy to make, yet impressive and very tasty! So thanks Brenda, the addition of the wasabi makes all the difference.

I find it fascinating to be invited into

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



other people's homes for a meal. Everyone handles the whole thing so differently. Part of it, I guess, is how comfortable the hosts are with the size of the crowd and how well they know the crowd.

Some people spend days ensuring that their whole home is immaculate. Others barely pay attention to anything beyond the kitchen. Some cook up a wildly gourmet meal and others serve up a pot of stew. Some serve vintage wines that took hours to select. Others serve a bottle from their homemade wine collection. Some have lists all over the place ensuring that a garnish is not forgotten, candles are lit, music is right.

But none of these things seem to affect how much fun is had. The most fun seems to be had when the hosts are relaxed—this seems to be the magic ingredient that brings the atmosphere, food and drinks all together and makes a great evening. We had a great evening at the Roffels—the hosts were working their magic.

Soon we'll all be getting ready to host some holiday parties; we'll talk more about that later I'm sure. But in the meantime, keep in mind that no matter how perfect all the details are, nothing can make up for an exhausted host. So take it easy on yourself and have fun and keep cooking!

Email your questions and comments to Lori and Gerry at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com

Smoked Salmon Canapes with Wasabi Cream Cheese

Ingredients

- pumpernickel rounds
- plain cream cheese
- wasabi
- smoked salmon
- capers



Method

1. Mix cream cheese with a tiny bit of wasabi, until smooth. (Start with about a cup of cream cheese and a teaspoon of wasabi—taste and add more wasabi, if needed to suit your palate).
2. Spread cream cheese on pumpernickel rounds.
3. Top with a folded piece of smoked salmon and a couple of capers.
4. Chill until ready to serve.

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