

The Rise of the Backyard Hero

Summer Entertaining Tips

by *Ted Allen*

(NAPSA)—A revolution is taking place deep within the barbecue pits and salad bowls of America. Social status is no longer decided by the greenness of your lawn. It's not dictated by the kind of car you drive. It isn't even being the first one on the block to own a high-definition plasma TV.

In today's style-conscious culture, greatness is measured by entertaining expertise. However, being a good host means more than just renting a keg and flipping the burgers at the right time. You may know your way around the kitchen, but do you know your way around the tiki bar?

Here are some tips to keep in mind when planning your summer shindigs:

Set the mood

Make a good first impression. In the daytime, floral centerpieces will get you off on the right foot. When dusk falls, lighting is key. Line the pathways to your door with luminaries. Install torch lanterns and place citronella candles around the porch to keep the bugs away. Make sitting outside enjoyable.

Be prepared

Take care of potential pitfalls before you stumble into them. Provide places in the house where people can go to cool off or to seek shelter if it rains. And don't forget to have sunblock, ice and a first-aid kit handy for guests.

Add flair, not calories

If 2004 is going to be the "summer of guilt-free indulgences," you'll need to cater to your guests' special needs. Drinks are a great place to cut calories and still retain taste. At the core of your drink should be a no-calorie mixer like Perrier.



The food and wine guru from "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy," Ted Allen, shares tips on savvy entertaining.

When garnishing, go for the unpredictable. Toss in blueberries and raspberries. Better yet, throw in frozen grapes and pineapple chunks on skewers. (This also makes a refreshing poolside snack.)

Lighten the load

It's an outdoor event, and it's casual. Don't get stuck doing dishes or cleaning up broken glass. Use disposable plates, utensils and cups. You can even buy plastic martini glasses at most party stores. Serve only beverages that come in light, easy-to-carry containers. Perrier's new plastic bottle won't break if you drop it, and it can be recycled.

For non-alcoholic drink recipes and more party tips from Ted Allen, visit www.perrierusa.com.