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wine and tapas dinner

with Tony Schubert

M E N U

HORS D'OEUVRES
parmesan-stuffed dates, brie with thyme, roasted almonds, marinated olives

FIRST COURSE
roasted red peppers with hazelnuts, sautéed pesto mushrooms, mini spiced meatballs

SECOND COURSE
wilted spinach with raisins, garlic-roasted green beans, griddled shrimp and potatoes

THIRD COURSE
cumin-scented chicken, cucumber-yogurt-mint salad, focaccia

DESSERT
fruit sorbets topped with sparkling wine

Invite eight friends for a Mediterranean-inspired tasting menu of small dishes and experiential wine wisdom. "Get people to be interactive and see how great certain wines and foods taste together," says Los Angeles event producer Tony Schubert of Event Eleven. Schubert, who orchestrated Shannon Elizabeth's wedding, swathes the scene in a palate of purples, plums and burgundies; serves wines paired with tapas courses; and lets guests sip and snack their way through the evening. —Erika Lenkert



A simple centerpiece of three low containers of flowers leaves room for tapas serving dishes.

countdown

two weeks Invite guests.

one week Buy wine, music. Order flowers.

one day Buy groceries. Make meatballs, prep chicken; refrigerate. Set table. Chill wines.

morning of Make Parmesan dates, salad croutons.

four hours Make chicken and salad (sliced cucumber with yogurt and chopped mint); refrigerate.



Use corks as place-card holders.

two hours Make spinach salad, pesto mushrooms.

20 minutes Set out hors d'oeuvres. Open wines.

during the party Bake chicken; reheat dishes, such as meatballs, as needed.

after dinner Top sorbet with sparkling wine; serve.

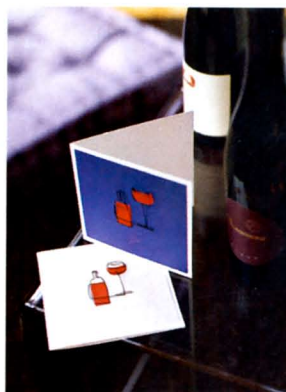
setting the scene

invitation Send invites with a wine or grape theme, such as these handmade cards with wire bottle and glass embellishments (5" x 5"), Fold, \$10 each; at de Medici Ming Fine Paper, 206-624-1983.

tabletop Choose a runner and napkins in purple, plum or burgundy; tie napkins with a ribbon accented with a light purple rose or burgundy calla lily. Make place-card holders from wine corks (make a 1/2" cut in top to hold cards). Add low bouquets of purple sweet peas or wine-colored calla lilies; cast a soft glow with amethyst votives (\$12 for set of six; West Elm, 866-428-6468).

tapas service After hors d'oeuvres, serve each tapas course at the table. Lisa Field of L.A.'s Catering by Field, who created the tapas menu, suggests setting small plates of each dish at both ends of the table (it's easier than passing big platters from end to end).

music Spin Cuban and Latin jazz, and mix in Seal's new self-titled release (Warner Bros.) and Yo-Yo Ma's *Obrigado Brazil* (Sony).



what to pour: course by course

"Always keep a balance between flavors of food and wine," says Christian Navarro of Wally's Wine & Spirits in L.A. So try to match lighter courses with delicate wines, and heavier courses with bolder ones. Though you'll be changing wines, you don't have to have fresh glasses for each course; choose good-size all-purpose wineglasses and empty leftover wine from glasses in ice buckets placed at each end of the table.

hors d'oeuvres Crisp whites cleanse the palate of rich cheeses and salty snacks. Try NV Roederer Estate Anderson Valley sparkling wine (\$19) or 2001 Silverado sauvignon blanc (\$15).

first course Serve a light chardonnay, such as 2001 Bouchard La Vignée (\$10), whose fruitiness tones down spicy meatballs and complements the sweet roasted peppers.

second course Match the delicate flavors

of shrimp and raisins with a light red, such as a pinot noir (try 2000 Wild Horse, \$18; or 2000 Talley Arroyo Grande, \$25).

third course A full-bodied red, a 2000 Bonaccorsi syrah (\$30) or 2001 Qupé Syrah California (\$12), will stand up to the savory dishes and has fruitiness to complement the cumin chicken and rich cucumber salad.

dessert Top sweet sorbet with sparkling Piper Sonoma blanc de noir (\$13).