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SOUTH

THE MAGAZINE OF
SOUTH JOHNSON COUNTY

All About Attitude

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dressing an art of self-expression



THE ART OF HOSPITALITY

With the holiday season right around the corner, learn to host and be hosted in the most conscientious manner.

WORDS: MANDY PHALEN

The holidays are quickly approaching, and many of us will soon take on the responsibility of having guests stay in our home. Some guests will be friends and some will be family, but one of the most important considerations every host and hostess should make is the creation of a comfortable and enjoyable stay. Each step of the way, in every aspect of the preparation, conscientious hosts put themselves in the shoes of their guests. From the minute they walk through the door, guests should feel like royalty. By following these simple tips, your home will feel like Buckingham Palace in no time at all.

Hosts We Love

We enjoy staying with people usually for one of two reasons. First, a good host has a wonderful, luxurious home filled with fun and amusing people, making each visit a delightful experience. The other reason we love to visit certain homes is, on the contrary, related entirely to the relationship between the guest and the hosts opening up their home. We love the accommodations because we love the homeowner, regardless of any strange quirks he or she may have. Nowhere do we feel so much at home when we feel appreciated with the unconditional acceptance of who we are, and though it may have none of the magnificence of a lavish home fit for the royal family, it is often far more pleasant. In either situation, we love to stay with others when it's enjoyable and offers a relaxing environment similar to your own home.

Invitation

One of the first steps a good host should take is to send a very clear and concise verbal or written invitation. Your guests want to understand without a doubt that you really want them to stay with you. In order to reduce the stress and perplexity of traveling, think about all of the details you would need to prepare for a trip or stay with someone: dates, timing, nearest airport, weather, planned activities, etc. By providing several small details regarding your guests' travel and accommodations, you demonstrate your willingness to serve as host and create a welcoming feeling for your guests.

Meeting and Greeting

Upon your guests' arrival, meet each person cordially and give them the impression that fun and activities could not possibly start without them. Show them to their room and allow them some time to freshen themselves and get settled as necessary. Always offer your guests a light snack and choice of beverages since they have most likely been traveling for some time.

The Guest Room

The perfect guest room is not necessarily a vast chamber decorated in the latest trends comparable to the penthouse suite at a five-star hotel. Its perfection is the result of nothing



more than meticulous attention to detail.

If you want to know how your guests will feel in their room, spend quality time every now and then in each room that is set apart for visitors. In the bedroom you should make sure (by sleeping in it at least once) that the bed is comfortable, that the sheets are soft and that there are enough pillows for someone to sleep comfortably. Always make sure your guests know where more pillows and blankets are located in case they get chilled during the night. More importantly, make sure you understand how the temperature in the room will influence your guests' sleeping habits. There should be a night light near the door and one in the guest bath as well as a lamp at the head of the bed, giving your guests the ability to lie in bed and read.

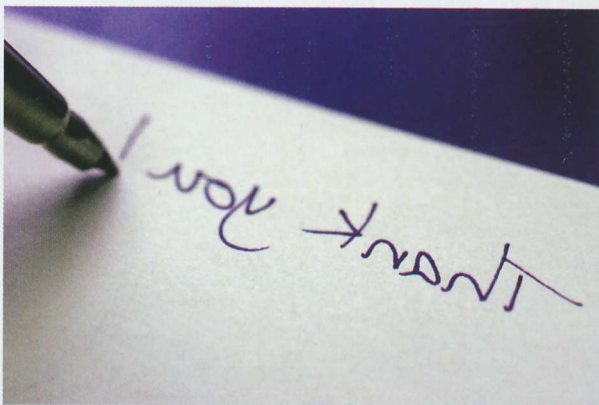
Upon entering the guest bath, ensure that every detail is accounted for by checking the water pressure in the shower, lighting and even flushing the toilet a few times to make sure everything is working properly. Furthermore, make sure that in every bathroom there are plenty of soft, absorbent bath towels, washcloths and a great bath mat. And lastly, make sure your guests have access to soap, shampoo and mouthwash.

Activities

In homes that we like to visit again and again, there is always a balanced combination of special attention on the part of the host and hostess and the ideal freedom of the guests to occupy their time as they choose. Have a schedule of activities ready, but don't play traffic cop by insisting that guests follow it exactly. The ideal hosting plan includes entertainment and activities that guests can take or leave as they please.

Be a Good House Guest

On the flip side, when you are not the host but are acting in the hosted capacity, always bring a small gift to say thank you at the onset. Arriving with something as a way of thanking your host in advance is a thoughtful and caring gesture. Gifts of colorful candle sets, personalized engraved wine stoppers, monogrammed soap sets or cocktail napkins are great options. Then, upon your return home, send a small card to again say thank you to your host.



- Top 10 things NOT to Do**
- You don't want to be the guest that no one invites again. Remember, a good guest does not:
- "Dog ear" your host's books or magazines
 - Set a glass on a polished wood table without a coaster
 - Track muddy shoes into the house
 - Leave the bedroom as though it had been through a cyclone
 - Bring an uninvited poorly trained pet
 - Show up a day late and stay two days longer
 - Display overly revealing sleeping attire
 - Monopolize the television remote
 - Raid the refrigerator and drink the last cup of milk
 - Expect to be entertained the whole time
 - Use all the hot water first thing in the morning

Whether you are hosting guests or being hosted, remember that your days will be filled with chaos and comedy. Planning ahead will enhance your ability to enjoy and maintain the relationships with the people you care about most.

Mandy Phalen, owner of Event Studio, has been planning events and special occasions for more than eight years. You can contact Mandy at (913) 469-1850 or visit www.event-studio.com.

