

# 435

## SOUTH

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# THE EDUCATION ISSUE

**CLOSING THE BOOK:**

Blue Valley West says goodbye  
to Principal JOHN LAURIE

**HIGH MARKS:**

Find out what makes Blue Valley  
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**PLUS ELEGANT DINING AT EBT AND BACK-TO-SCHOOL FASHIONS FOR THE STYLISH STUDENT**

*Is a private school right for your child?*



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## DESTINATION RELAXATION

*Bring your vacation home with a fun theme party this summer*

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WORDS: MANDY PHALEN

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Summer vacation. I love hearing these words. When used together, these two little words twirl a kaleidoscope of sensory memories. Some of my best memories find me sitting around a campfire in the cool mountain air roasting marshmallows.

Most of us take some kind of summer vacation, be it a two-week cruise to the Mediterranean or a quick getaway to the lake. But no matter where you go on your vacation, you can bring your vacation home to your friends and host a theme party honoring your destination, or at a minimum, your vacation experience.

People love to attend events that are like a mini trip that doesn't require a passport or hauling luggage across a busy airport terminal. To throw your very own vacation-themed party, start by picking up several post cards on one of your excursions to serve as invitations

for your party. And don't forget to have your photos developed so you can share stories with your friends.

Think about how you felt on your vacation and stay true to the authenticity of the region, the people and the cuisine and the way it's served. If you visited Italy or Napa Valley, host a wine and cheese party. If you sunned in Mexico, serve margaritas and tapas. Playing into the local flavor will give your party a look and feel all its own. Remember, you want to transport your guests to an exotic destination without leaving the dining room table.

No matter how busy you are, there's always time for a wine and cheese party. With so many world-class cheeses available today, it takes little effort to bring a variety of intriguing flavors to the party table. Choose great cheeses, pair them with fabulous wines and

present them in style.

Fresh, colorful, intriguing and quick, Asian cuisine makes perfect fare. So go ahead—pick up the phone (or cook your own if you so choose). With a symphony of Asian flavors such as lime, ginger, garlic, and lip-tingling chilies, the cuisine creates a party on your palate. And don't forget to add a little red to the table—it's the traditional Asian color of good luck.

At your Mediterranean-themed patio party, warmth, graciousness and good taste combine for an occasion as sparkling and joyful as the beautiful sea itself. It's a feast for the senses! For true Mediterranean allure, let the season's freshest, most colorful produce play a starring role on the table.

Keying in on a specific ingredient can also be a fun twist. Perhaps you drove up the coast of Maine and fell in love with crab. Serve your guests three or four items in which you use your new-found favorite ingredient such as crab risotto, crab cakes and wonton crisps with Dungeness crab.

And even if you choose not to go on a journey this year, host a backyard barbecue and create your own exotic flavors by adding a new twist on an old favorite. Instead of your traditional barbecue brisket, try some absolutely delicious new recipes ranging from Indian-spiced lamb or Asian-accented dishes from Vietnam, Japan, and Thailand. Or serve chicken fajitas or herb-rubbed salmon from the Pacific Northwest. Yum!

In my mind, a party doesn't have to be an elaborate, expensive, dress-up affair to be a success. In fact, some of the best parties I've ever hosted have been minus the perfectly matched napkins, the pressed linens and the expensive catered food. Instead, the tables were decorated with simple touches, the food was homemade and best of all, I allowed myself time to greet every guest who entered my home.

So relax, have fun, take pleasure in having people over to enjoy the months of summer. It doesn't last long!



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](http://WWW.EVENT-STUDIO.COM).



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