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SOUTH

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THIS ONE'S FOR YOU, GUYS!

BEHOLD: THE MEN'S ISSUE

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FOOD GOES MINI

Play into summer's hottest food trend for your next soiree

WORDS: MANDY PHALEN

The beginning of the summer months seems to revitalize us. We start entertaining more and plan many other things just for fun. This month, take some time to renew your friendships and plan a social gathering filled with close friends and fabulous food.

When it comes to planning food for a party, many hosts are faced with less-than-scintillating ideas. For warmer weather soirees, we recommend keeping the menu simple (and delicious) to appeal to guests

of all ages. If you're worried your recipe box doesn't allow much creativity beyond chicken, think again. By personalizing special extras—an added detail here, a decadent dessert there—you can easily give a nod to what's hot in the food world.

These days, people are not only serving tapas instead of traditional fare, they're offering favorites such as mini Philly cheese steaks, tiny cheeseburgers and petite pressed paninis.

Anything worth serving is more chic and interesting when it's made petite, which works with virtually any food. Instead of serving a large portion of a food item, you or your caterer can just as easily change the size of the item, making an otherwise ordinary dish into something chic and memorable.

But if your family gatherings always revolve around Aunt Sally's potato salad and Grandma's apple pie, include those dishes in your menu as well. Ask your

culinary-inclined friends or relatives to contribute their specialties to your soiree, but instead of asking for super-size, go for mini portions. In this day and age of over-indulgence, bigger is not always better.

Using the right serving platters to present your petite cuisine can make the buffet table both festive and practical. Add whimsy to your menu by serving a course in an unexpected container. Think beyond the basic dinner plate, and plan to serve food from a variety of heights, placing dainty sandwiches on cake stands, draping fruits over three-tiered platters and serving small salads in martini glasses.

For a twist on the traditional, give guests a taste of three summer soups by presenting each one in a shot glass, or serve your seiche in a chilled martini glass.

For some celebrations, a cake is a given, but many modern hosts are opting to have their cake and a buffet-style



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selection of delicious desserts. Dessert tables—often called Viennese tables—can be stocked with everything from miniature biscotti and fruit tarts to tiny Key lime and apple pies. The smaller and more individualized the portion, the better. Consider filling in with secret family recipes and childhood indulgences like Oreos or mom's famous chocolate chip cookies served with a taste of milk in a shot glass or champagne flute.

Be creative in serving, but do remember to keep your foods safe to eat. If food will be sitting on an outdoor buffet table for several hours in warm weather, be sure to keep foods cold. Place fruit and dips in chilled bowls and place platters of sandwiches containing meats and cheeses directly on a bed of ice. If the weather is very hot, it's wise to serve perishables in small containers and replenish them frequently.

I know we are all looking forward to enjoying the warmer weather, renewing our over-the-fence friendships and sharing in the seasonal beauty that blesses our region. Have fun!



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.

