

FOR HOSTS DAVID AND MICHELLE BACH, SHOPPING FOR TONIGHT'S DINNER IS AS EASY AS TAKING AN EARLY MORNING WALK TO THEIR FAVORITE FOOD AND FLOWER SHOPS IN SOHO.

ENTERTAINING WITH STYLE

# Slowing Down in the Big City

Staying in is "in"—especially when that means dinner at home with good friends. Here's how one Manhattan couple keeps the cooking simple, stylish, and fun.

PRODUCED BY RANDI DANFORTH    TEXT BY MALACHY DUFFY    PHOTOGRAPHY BY RAYMOND PATRICK



TOP PARTY TREND  
COOKING FOR COMFORT

MENU FOR 6

CAVIAR

MARTINIS

VELVE CLICQUOT CHAMPAGNE

CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

ROASTED CORNISH GAME HENS  
WITH SESAME-GINGER SAUCE

WILD RICE AND JASMINE RICE PILAF

BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER SALAD  
WITH RED ONION DRESSING

A. RAFANELLI 1999 ZINFANDEL

GINGERBREAD CAKE WITH  
CARAMELIZED PEAR COMPOTE

COFFEE

RECIPES BEGIN ON PAGE 106

THE DINING ROOM TABLE IS NARROW,  
BUT THAT'S ITS BEST FEATURE.  
"IT JUST MAKES THE EVENING MORE  
INTIMATE," SAYS MICHELLE, SEATED AT  
LEFT WITH (CLOCKWISE) TOM COOPER,  
MARIANNE TIELEMANS, DAVID BACH,  
MARY CRYDER, AND BRANT CRYDER.

## ENTERTAINING WITH STYLE

**A**lthough David and Michelle Bach live deep in the heart of SoHo—the downtown Manhattan neighborhood rich with terrific restaurants—these days, like so many other people, they often opt to stay home and cook for friends rather than go out. Transplanted San Franciscans who were both financial consultants (David is the author of two best-selling financial advice books), they've made a wide circle of new friends and, in true New York fashion, reconnected with old ones—going as far back as high school—who shared their dream of living in Manhattan.

The open layout of Michelle and David's loft makes it ideal for gathering these friends together, with a big kitchen (by New York standards), a handsome dining table, and a cozy seating area beside a big brick fireplace—a luxury in the big city—which inevitably draws people closer. Sometimes (but not always) the

chairs and sofas get pushed aside to make room for a little post-dessert “Dave Bach dance party.” It's all about having fun.

And the same applies to the way the Bachs cook. “When we entertain,” says Michelle, “we really like to keep things simple so we are able to enjoy ourselves as much as our guests.” That means relying on a menu of tried-and-true favorites. “We've gotten over trying to impress people—it never works, and it adds stress to an evening.”

Stress is one thing that is definitely not part of this winter dinner party. With the fire blazing and the loft filled with laughter and happy conversation, David and Michelle have proved once again that they've found the right strategy for entertaining: “We like to have fun and eat good food.” It's that simple—and it works every time.



GOOD LOOKS, GOOD TASTE: THE MAIN COURSE FEATURES ROASTED GAME HENS, BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER SALAD, AND WILD RICE PILAF (RECIPES BEGIN ON PAGE 106).



MARY CRYDER DIGS IN.

THE GIRLS OFFER MICHELLE A HAND IN THE KITCHEN.



CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP (RECIPE ON PAGE 106)

## THE MENU AND SHOPPING

"This neighborhood is amazing for food shopping," says Michelle. "We have everything right within a few blocks— butcher shops in Little Italy, a great wine store right up the street, Korean markets for terrific flowers, and Dean & DeLuca, all in easy walking distance." Once they've planned the menu, the Bachs will go out the day before or the morning of the big day to buy all they need.

For tonight's meal, they are serving dishes that have drawn raves in the past. The butternut squash soup with curry is warming and filling; it can be made a day in advance and kept at the ready for reheating. The sesame and ginger Cornish game hens can be prepared ahead and then popped into the oven a little more than half an hour before they're going to be served. The salad and wild rice can be finished while the

hens are roasting. The cake can be baked the day before. And the ice cream? That's easy: Just buy and scoop.

The wine served with dinner is a particular Bach favorite: the Sonoma County Zinfandel from A. Rafanelli. "We met the owners on a trip a few years ago. Their production is limited, but we can buy two cases a year," says David. "And we like to share it with friends." ➤



THE BACHS TOAST THE GROUP.

THE NIGHT BEGINS WITH DAVID'S "FAMOUS" MARTINIS AT THE KITCHEN BAR.



## THE STRATEGY AND THE FLOW

The loft's layout is perfect for the way David and Michelle entertain. "I'm the cook, so I'm in the kitchen," says Michelle. It's a roomy space that can accommodate the hostess and a few helpers. "I love having people give me a hand with the chopping, stirring—anything they want to do."

While Michelle and company are busy in the kitchen proper, David mans the bar—a raised granite countertop that separates the kitchen from the dining area. Barstools provide perches for those who aren't on KP, so everyone is together. "I am famous for my Martinis," says David. "I like them completely dry, and I shake them long and hard." Since the Bachs are serving caviar, there's also bubbly on hand.

The party then moves to the dining table, which is long but narrower than usual. "That's one of its best features," says Michelle. "It makes the evening more intimate." For dessert, it's on to the seating area around the fireplace, which gives everyone a chance for a stretch. And after dessert? "If you want to stay and help with the dishes," says Michelle, "you won't hear me say no."

## CURRIED BUTTERNUT SQUASH SOUP

This has all the right spices for a chilly winter night. The Bachs pour a Sonoma Zinfandel.

6 SERVINGS

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cups chopped onions
- 1½ teaspoons curry powder
- ½ to ¾ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- 6 cups ½- to ¾-inch cubes peeled butternut squash (from 3 pounds)
- 3½ cups low-salt chicken broth

Plain yogurt (optional)  
Fresh cilantro leaves

Heat oil in large pot over medium heat. Add onions. Cover; cook until soft, stirring often, about 5 minutes. Add curry powder and ½ teaspoon cayenne; stir 30 seconds. Add squash and broth; bring to boil. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover; simmer until squash is very tender, about 30 minutes. Puree soup in batches in blender until smooth. Return to same pot. Season with salt and pepper, adding more cayenne if desired. (Can be made 1 day ahead. Chill uncovered until cold, then cover and keep chilled. Rewarm before serving.)

Ladle soup into bowls; top with dollop of yogurt, if desired, and cilantro.

## ROASTED CORNISH GAME HENS WITH SESAME-GINGER SAUCE

Use poultry shears to split the hens and remove the backbones.

6 SERVINGS

- ½ cup soy sauce
- ¼ cup Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup (packed) dark brown sugar
- 2 tablespoons finely chopped peeled fresh ginger
- 2 tablespoons oriental sesame oil
- 3 Cornish game hens, cut in half lengthwise, backbones removed

Sesame seeds

Whisk first 5 ingredients in medium bowl. Transfer half of marinade to small saucepan; reserve. Pour remaining marinade into 15x10x2-inch glass baking dish. Add hens; turn to coat. Marinate 30 minutes at room temperature or up to 4 hours in the refrigerator, turning occasionally.

Preheat oven to 425°F. Arrange hens, skin side up, on large rimmed baking sheet. Sprinkle with sesame seeds. Roast until cooked through and brown, about 40 minutes. Transfer to platter. Pour pan juices into saucepan with reserved marinade. Bring to boil, stirring often. Simmer until sauce coats spoon, about 5 minutes; pour into bowl. Serve hens with sauce.

## WILD RICE AND JASMINE RICE PILAF

Green onions, dried apricots, and cashews add new interest to this classic side dish.

6 SERVINGS

- 1 cup (6 ounces) wild rice
- 1 14-ounce can low-salt chicken broth
- 1 cup (6½ ounces) jasmine rice
- ¼ cup (½ stick) butter
- 1 cup chopped green onions
- ½ cup diced dried apricots
- ½ cup coarsely chopped roasted salted cashews (about 3 ounces)
- 2 teaspoons grated lemon peel

Cook wild rice in large pot of boiling salted water until just tender, about 55 minutes. Drain well. Bring broth to boil in medium saucepan over high heat. Mix in jasmine rice. Reduce heat to medium-low. Cover; cook until rice is tender and broth

is absorbed, about 18 minutes. Let all rice cool at least 1 hour and up to 2 hours.

Melt butter in heavy large skillet over medium-high heat. Add onions, apricots, cashews, and lemon peel. Stir until onions are soft, about 1 minute. Add all rice; toss to blend and heat through, about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper.

#### **BROCCOLI AND CAULIFLOWER SALAD WITH RED ONION DRESSING**

*This salad is served at room temperature.*

6 SERVINGS

½ cup olive oil  
1 teaspoon dried crushed red pepper  
¼ cup red wine vinegar  
2 large garlic cloves, minced  
2 cups thinly sliced red onions

6 cups broccoli florets (from 4 large stalks)  
6 cups cauliflower florets (from 1 large head)

Heat oil and crushed red pepper in heavy small saucepan over medium-high heat until oil begins to bubble around edge of pan, about 1 minute. Pour into large bowl; cool to lukewarm. Whisk in vinegar and garlic. Mix onions into dressing. Let marinate at least 1 hour and up to 3 hours, tossing often.

Cook broccoli and cauliflower florets in large pot of boiling salted water until just crisp-tender, about 5 minutes. Drain; transfer to bowl of ice water to chill quickly. Drain very well and pat dry.

Mix broccoli and cauliflower into dressing. Season with salt and pepper. Let stand up to 1 hour, tossing occasionally.

#### **GINGERBREAD CAKE WITH CARAMELIZED PEAR COMPOTE**

*This scrumptious dessert is Michelle Bach's version of a recipe from California Fresh Harvest, a publication of the Junior League of Oakland-East Bay, California.*

8 TO 10 SERVINGS

##### CAKE

Nonstick vegetable oil spray  
1 15- to 16-ounce can pear halves in syrup, drained well  
¾ cup buttermilk  
1 tablespoon vanilla extract

3 cups all purpose flour  
1½ teaspoons ground cinnamon  
1 teaspoon baking soda  
¾ teaspoon ground ginger  
¾ teaspoon ground allspice  
½ teaspoon salt  
¼ teaspoon ground cloves  
1 cup (2 sticks) unsalted butter, room temperature  
1 cup (packed) dark brown sugar  
¼ cup mild-flavored (light) molasses  
3 large eggs

##### COMPOTE

¼ cup (½ stick) unsalted butter  
2½ pounds Bosc pears, peeled, halved, cored, cut crosswise into ¼-inch-thick slices  
½ cup sugar


Vanilla ice cream

**FOR CAKE:** Preheat oven to 350°F. Spray 12-cup Bundt pan with nonstick spray, then butter and flour pan. Puree canned pears in blender until smooth. Place ¾ cup puree in small bowl for cake (reserve any remaining puree for another use); mix in buttermilk and vanilla.

Sift flour and next 6 ingredients into medium bowl. Using electric mixer, beat butter in large bowl until fluffy. Add brown sugar and beat until blended. Gradually beat in molasses. Beat in eggs 1 at a time (batter may appear curdled). Beat in flour mixture in 3 additions alternately with pear mixture in 2 additions.

Transfer batter to pan. Bake cake until tester inserted near center comes out clean, about 55 minutes. Cool cake in pan on rack 10 minutes. Turn out onto rack; cool completely. (*Can be made 1 day ahead. Cover; let stand at room temperature.*)

**FOR COMPOTE:** Melt butter in large skillet over high heat. Add pears; sprinkle sugar over. Sauté until pears are tender and juices thicken, stirring often, about 18 minutes. Let stand at room temperature at least 1 hour and up to 4 hours.

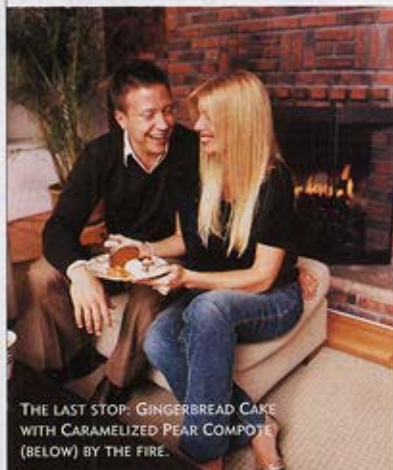
Rewarm compote over low heat, stirring gently. Cut cake into slices. Place cake slice, compote, and scoop of ice cream on each plate and serve. 

*Malachy Duffy is the lifestyle editor for Bloomberg Personal Finance magazine.*

## SETTING THE SCENE

Michelle is in charge of the table. "We blend different things, and because we like all of them, it all seems to go together." For this dinner, she has lined up some blue-green glass vases that she found at Clio, a new design store just around the corner. She fills them with bunches of different flowers, short enough for people to see one another across the table, and alternates them with votive candles in short glass holders.

Deejay friend Brant Cryder burned the CDs that are playing tonight. Brant characterizes his sound as "down-tempo sexy groove." It's just right for a little dancing later in the evening.



THE LAST STOP: GINGERBREAD CAKE WITH CARAMELIZED PEAR COMPOTE (BELOW) BY THE FIRE.



STYLING: ENZO ANGILERI