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# Dining *by Design*

When Caroline And  
Steve Thompson Host  
Their Annual Holiday Party  
In Their Santa Barbara  
Home, Guests Are Treated  
To Grace And Elegance

TEXT BY DAWN MOORE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GASZTON GAL



With the sun setting behind the historic Courthouse, the Thompson's guests settle in to enjoy roasted butternut squash soup on a balmy Santa Barbara winter night. Matouk's "Mirisol" linen is tucked beneath the cream soup cup.





*When an interior designer entertains*, one expects a beautiful tablescape. No surprise there. But entertaining with grace is a gift that can't be learned—a host either has it or they don't. And Caroline and Steve Thompson, owners of Cabana Home in Santa Barbara and Mill Valley, have it.

"My mother taught me everything I know," says Steve Thompson, "She made everything inviting." Caroline Thompson agrees with her husband of twenty six years. "It's so important our guests feel welcomed and at home the minute they walk through our door," she says. And indeed, guests are greeted at the Thompson's door with a sparkling silver tray holding the evening's wines. For their annual holiday, long time friends have gathered for what has become a twenty five year tradition. This year, the Thompsons table was arranged on their rooftop terrace at sunset. Pears and peacock feathers in an antique repousse silver bowl set the color palate and a silvered spruce velvet cloth, accented with Matouk linen Moorish key placemats echoed the surrounding mountain hues. Mixing items to create a theme inspires Caroline. "The table becomes a collection of heirloom treasured pieces," she says.



UPPER LEFT Presqu'île Winery's Santa Maria Valley Chardonnay and award-winning Pinot Noir were served in Baccarat's "Perfection." A photograph by Robert Stivers greets each guest and is part of the Thompson's vast modern art collection.

ABOVE "When deciding on the guest list, I try to always have someone fun and make sure to be seated next to them!" jokes Steve Thompson with marketing consultant Dawn Moore.









Lush fall harvest vegetables, savory rack of lamb and molten chocolate cake prepared by chef, Jessica Knight, made everyone leave the table with buttons undone. "Jessica handles all our events, both at the store and at home. Everyone loves her," Caroline says. A holiday feast celebrating long time friendships deserves extra care and Jessica's attention to the freshest herbs, seasonal locally grown produce and a presentation as elegant as the hosts themselves made for a dazzling holiday fete. ☐



UPPER LEFT Peacock feathers peak out of an antique Repousse bowl surrounded by a sterling cup collection found in Taxco, Mexico. UPPER RIGHT Caramelized onion tarts make the rounds on silver platters. LEFT Roasted Butternut Squash Soup. ABOVE Leisa Snyder and Dawn Moore.

**OPPOSITE** LOWER LEFT Wardrobe consultant Linleigh Richker and Cabana Home partners Leisa & Michael Snyder enjoy mini crab cakes. LOWER RIGHT Herb crusted rack of lamb and ratatouille is served on Haviland's "Shelton," originally Caroline's parent's wedding china.



Chef Jessica Knight's use of 24-hour tomatoes brings the vegetable's sweetness to the fore; blue hydrangeas accenting the crab cakes continue the evening's color theme.

LEFT Caroline and Steve Thompson with their daughter Caroline.