



OPPOSITE The “Sneek Easy” bar area is both beautiful and potent with exotic elixirs and vintage accessories. **LEFT** Lulu in shimmering damask invites guests to the space that was once the porte cochere. **ABOVE** Sparky oversees the hors d’oeuvres prep. **BELOW** Always in the freezer, tonight’s “surprise” ice cubes hold baby peppers.

ENTERTAINING ALCHEMY

Lulu Powers Works Her Enchanting Magic For A Holiday Feast

BY **DAWN MOORE** | PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MANOLO LANGIS**

AS GUESTS DRIFT IN to Lulu Powers’ candle-lit home, the accolades begin even before the first “Sneeky” is served. “I could smell the lamb chops where I parked four houses away!” “I really hit the ‘neighbor jackpot!” “Lulu is really some kind of magical unicorn - everything she touches sparkles.”



It’s safe to say these testimonials are just the latest in a star-studded catering career that includes clients like Will and Jada Pinkett Smith, Arianna Huffington, Madonna, and Bill Clinton. Lulu’s easy going style (“She makes things people want to eat!” notes another guest) belies her extensive knowledge of food, expert chef’s skills and calm in the face of potential calamity. Tonight, while arranging the grapes and manchego, she learned that the evening’s star hors d’oeuvre - fresh Clevedon Coast oysters from New Zealand - had just been in a crash totalling the car. Twenty minutes later, the oysters - and their wrangler - arrived via Uber unscathed. Lulu never missed a beat.

“My first memory of entertaining is of refilling drinks from the bar and serving mushroom croustades at my parents’ parties. Even at eight, I knew the party was a success when people were laughing and still having fun at 1:00 a.m. when I’d finally put myself to bed!” Mom Patty created a successful catering business with no formal training, and hired Lulu and her siblings to chop and slice inspiring her love of cooking from an early age.

But it was her charming and mischievous father Jimmy who would say, “I am just going to have myself a little sneeky” when he’d come in from working his vegetable garden who coined the term which would become a noun amongst the intelligentsia. Lulu’s next book will be dedicated to the whimsical moniker, because a Sneeky is not just a glass of wine or shot of bourbon. Oh no. It’s an intoxicating jamboree for all the senses with it’s high-octane spirits, colorful ingredients, and tinkling ice cubes including a surprise twig of





OPPOSITE It's all about the color. A pomegranate seed atop fried sage on figs with mascarpone and a "borrowed" gardenia accenting Bird in Hand sparkling rose entices all the senses. **LEFT** Embroidered napkins, mismatched hotel silver and magenta cockscomb stamp the tablescape with personal style. **BELOW** The entrance courtyard is almost too inviting to leave thanks to lush planting and equally lush seating covered in Sunbrella fabrics.

rosemary or actual cranberry suspended inside. The happy-making after-effects are almost besides the point.

"First, I use ingredients people can readily get or have on hand. Tonight, I had passion fruit handy and vodka, so that's what I used. I also always adorn my drink with something - whether it's grapes or a blackberry or even a piece of squash. For the Bird in Hand Sparkling rose served with dinner, I added gardenia's borrowed from my neighbor's tree. Yes, I've been known to "borrow" from my neighborhood..."

Since winters in SoCal are only distinguished from other seasons by the start of holiday music and the prolific appearance of root vegetables, Lulu likes to focus on more comfort food to set the cheer. "Around the holidays, I think of all the yummy things I like to eat that organically bring warm colors to the mix. Like a winter salad - I think of butternut squash, pomegranate seeds, roasted chestnuts." And then add one quirky ingredient. "Lulu has one of the top palates of any chef I've ever worked with," notes Jenny Rush of Santa Monica's Blue Plate Oysterette.

That said, The Entertainologist (aka Ms. Powers) is the first to say cooking is not essential for great entertaining. "One of the chicest parties I ever went to served only potato chips, prosciutto and Prosecco. I hear over and over again how intimidating party giving is. I just say what is more fun than sitting at a formal table and being served Belcampo Burgers and fries in a silver bowl? Use what you own. Everything doesn't have to match; use lots of low lighting and candles then between the warm glow of both the candles and the Sneekys, fun will ensue."

Lulu's table scapes are as rich with personal touches as her 1927 Spanish bungalow shared with husband Stephan Danelian and Bichon Frise pups Mr. Pickles, Teddy Kennedy and Sparky in Los Angeles' historic Miracle Mile



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Entertaining

RIGHT/BELOW Sublime Clevedon Coast oysters made even more glam perched on ice in a vintage silver compote accompany manchego, grilled herb bread and petite peppers stuffed with pimento cheese. **OPPOSITE** "When you come to my house, you never know who will show up. I love to socialize with good conversation." Made all the easier with individual bottles of LA distilled Our Vodka.



district. Her philosophy is a table should be theater - both enchanting and welcoming. "I used a client's incredible tea service for crudites once... asparagus popping out of the coffee pot and the green beans spilling from the creamer." For an offbeat Christmas theme, red and fuschia plaid mohair scarves from Zara are draped over a bold black and white stripe topped with mismatched vintage hotel silver. Handwritten notes on chalkboard easels engage guests as they look for their seats, but the finishing touch of colorfully embroidered napkins from Walker Valentine keep it luxe all the way through to dessert.

As the evening winds down, what does Lulu want guests to be talking about in the car ride home? "That they just had a great time and will never turn down the next invite!" Most likely, her guests are already clearing their calendars. **CH**



The Menu

SNEEKYS

- Bird in Hand Sparkling Pinot Noir
Rose with a Gardenia
- Passion Fruit Martini with my specialty ice cube

HORS D'OEUVRES

- Clevedon Coast from New Zealand and Kusshi from Washington state Oysters with Blue Plate Oysterette Cranberry Mignonette
- Farmers Market Grapes, Manchego with a Candied Kumquat Syrup, Dehydrated Persimmons, Pomegranate seeds
- Christmas Burrata with Grilled Herb Oil Bread
- Petite Peppers with Lulu's Favorite Pimento Cheese
- Figs with Mascarpone, Baked Prosciutto, Fried Sage with a Current Balsamic Drizzle

DINNER

- Madonna's Favorite Marinated Lamb Chops
- Garlic & Herb Filet Mignon
- Honey Mustard Salmon
- Salt and Vinegar Potatoes with Hot Paprika Aioli
- Haricots Verts with Herb Butter
- Seasoned Forbidden Black Rice
- Market Spinach Salad with Poppy Seed Vinaigrette
- Bird in Hand Chardonnay and Shiraz

DESSERT

- Individual Key Lime Pies with Edible Gold