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HOW WE ENTERTAIN!

GREENER LIVING • DEEDS & DON'TS

A Designer Entertains

A SAG HARBOR PRO OFFERS A FOOLPROOF PLAN FOR PARTY SUCCESS

BY BARONESS SHERI DE BORCHGRAVE | PHOTOGRAPHS BY NOËL SUTHERLAND

Libby Langdon—interior designer and commentator on HGTV's hit show *Small Space, Big Style*—has talent to spare. She has designed restaurants, residences and stores and scribed her ideas in a book (*Libby Langdon's Small Space Solutions*, Knack, 2009). But her friends and peers will argue that it's at her annual birthday party that her talents as a multifaceted tastemaker and host are in peak form. Langdon's refined technique for entertaining comes down to three simple ideas. Personalize, which she does with touches such as a framed watercolor painting with each guest's name that hangs from a brass knob on their bedroom door. Prep in Advance, which means typed timelines and to-do lists for Langdon and her fiancé, Keith O'Hea, so that when the curtain goes up, they have only to grill and socialize. And then there's what Langdon calls Presentation with Surprise. It manifests all over the party and all weekend long—herein we've picked our favorites.



A Ticket A Tasket

Upon entering their rooms, houseguests find a beach bag filled with water, towels, directions to the beach and magazines. It gives them license to venture out on their own without consulting the hostess.



Spell It Out

By the pool, guests can help themselves to plentiful towels and crossword puzzles. "When people put away their Blackberries and do the crosswords, the weekend has been a success," says Langdon.

Feeling Fresh

"Mint grows in our garden like weeds," says Langdon. "I put a fresh mint bouquet in every guest bathroom to make the room smell fresh—like a spa." Plus, it's more unexpected than flowers.



A Feast for the Eyes

A casual Friday-evening dinner kicks off the weekend. An elegant cream-and-white palette unifies the coral, shells and candles. Friday's fête feels beachy, while Saturday's décor is pulled from the garden.



All Hands on Deck

"Guests always want to help," says Langdon, who notes special tasks that are easy to assign. O'Hea's daughter Meghan (center, below) and Langdon's nieces Jordan and Alex shuck corn poolside while others roll strands of seagrass around cloth napkins so that setting the table is a snap.



Sing The Blues

Blue hydrangeas are Langdon's passion. She arranges them in an assortment of vessels, such as silver creamers and pottery teapots. "Use what you find in the garden or beach as decoration," she advises.

Room For 60

Two tables for 30 stretch out along Langdon's front porch. The setup recalls "dinner parties in some great foreign film where everyone sits at long tables, talks, drinks lots of wine and has a blast." Langdon and O'Hea stand near the buffet to greet guests, many of whom hail from North Carolina, her home state, and Chicago, his hometown.





Tiki Time

On her birthday night, Langdon surrounds her Sag Harbor home with tiki torches, which makes for a dramatic entrance. She has accumulated scores of hurricane lamps and votive candles and uses only candlelight when entertaining to set a romantic, exciting mood.

Freeze Frame

Langdon presents homemade blueberry vodka in bottles surrounded by ice blocks with imbedded flowers. She puts the vodka bottle into a cardboard juice carton, pours in water, drops in flowers and freezes. It never fails to dazzles guests.





Warming Up

With prep work done, Saturday evening begins with poolside cocktails featuring "Keith's Killer Concoctions"—Grey Goose vodka, pink lemonade and fresh key lime juice—which can be premixed. It's one of many elements the couple chooses to prepare in advance.





Rise And Shine

A breakfast buffet awaits houseguests in the morning. Langdon lays it out the night before, which allows the hosts to sleep in. (Though they don't!) The candlelit birthday went off without a hitch. "It was the most seamless, magical evening. Probably the most successful party I've ever had the pleasure to host."





Good Morning!
Hope you slept well. Help yourselves to everything!
The coffee is ready to go, it just needs to be turned ON. Fruit is out & there's yogurt... in the fridge.
We are so glad you're here, it's going to be a beautiful day!
Libby & Keith