

beyond the



tea party


A chic—but simple!—girls' get-together
brightens a winter's day

By Jane Morley

Photographs by Heather Weston • Food styling by April White

Prop styling by Mariellen Melker

Maureen Doron, ABOVE LEFT, owner of Bryn Mawr's Skirt, invites six of her dearest girlfriends—including her ingenious interior designer Mona Ross Berman, RIGHT—to her charming Delaware County home for a not-much-fuss, just-enough-frills afternoon of delicate French sandwiches, sparkling spiced-pear aperitifs, elegant and easy canneles and meringues, and (almost) homemade cocoa.



Maureen set up a cocoa bar with two kinds of hot chocolate (white and dark), splurge-worthy handmade marshmallows, muscovado sugar, rock candy, orange-scented sugar and dainty Kate Spade teacups and saucers. The china's gilt rims echo the house's brass accents. "I used to think of gold tones as older and staid, but now I've totally converted: They feel really fresh," says Maureen.



Salmon roses, white hydrangeas and chinaberry from Beautiful Blooms in Philadelphia reflect the powdery palettes of the living and dining rooms. For personalized invitations, Maureen brought two fabric swatches—one from her silky custom curtains and another from a throw pillow—to Vanessa Kreckel at Wayne's Two Paperdolls.



The mostly store-bought fare required light assembly the morning of the party. "I'm a wife, I'm a mom, I'm self-employed—I want my guests to have the absolute best, but at a certain point I need some help," Maureen says. "If you go to the right stores and buy some things pre-made, but then put your own touch on them, your guests will feel you put time and effort into things."



Boxwood atop the mantel feels organic and free-form, not too garland-y.

Crystal icicle pendants hung from fishing line and secured with painter's tape are a more glamorous form of tinsel. Urns of large magnolia branches flank the fireplace, as do weathered terra cotta vases with preserved moss spheres. "Magnolia has a holiday feel without being obvious, like holly or fir," says Charlie Haldeman, design and studio director of Beautiful Blooms.





Placing the bar—stocked with champagne cocktail-style aperitifs made with pear vodka, brandy, spiced cordial syrup, sparkling apple cider, bitters and a lemon twist—in the living room, across the hallway from the sandwiches, salad and sweets in the dining room, encourages guests to move and mingle. See page 94 for the cocktail recipe.



Caramel-sweet

canneles from Chestnut Hill's Metropolitan Bakery, airy meringues from Wayne's Aux Petits Délices, and classic coconut macaroons and cat tongues from Narberth's Le Petit Mitron look extra pretty on Ralph Lauren's porcelain cake stands. Says Maureen, "When the plates start to get empty, I stack them and they still look great." Interior designer Mona Ross Berman chose the built-in cabinets to add architecture to the dining room, *BELOW*, the chocolate-brown grasscloth wallpaper to add texture and dimension, and the glass chandelier for subtle drama.

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY LIZ JACOBS





behind the scenes



The Drink

Spiced-Pear Sparkle

From Katie Loeb of Chick's Café & Wine Bar,
614 South 7th Street, 215-625-3700.

Makes about 12-14 drinks

- 1/2 c. Absolut Pears vodka
- 1/2 c. St. Rémy VSOP brandy
- 1/4 c. Fee Brother's Spiced Cordial Syrup
- 5/8 c. fresh lemon juice
- 1/2 Tbsp. Angostura bitters
- Martinelli's Sparkling Cider
- Lemon twists, for garnish

Mix together first five ingredients and chill. Add 2 Tbsp. of chilled mixture to each champagne flute. Fill each glass with sparkling cider. Garnish with fresh lemon twist.

The Menu

Baguette sandwiches: ham and gruyere, sun-dried tomato and tapenade

Salad: fig and almond with honey-pear vinaigrette

Cheese: Sainte-Maure Caprifeuille with beets and walnuts

Cocktail: Sparkling spiced-pear

Cookies: Meringues, canneles, cat's tongues, coconut macaroons

Hot chocolate bar



To-Do List

TWO WEEKS BEFORE PARTY:

- Mail invitations to guests

ONE WEEK BEFORE PARTY:

- Count RSVPs
- Purchase nonperishable ingredients

2 DAYS BEFORE PARTY:

- Call bakeries and place orders (Plan on 2-3 pastries per guest. Each baguette makes four sandwiches; plan on 1-2 sandwiches per person.)
- Assemble floral arrangements (Store in a cool, dry garage until day of party, and water daily.)

DAY BEFORE PARTY:

- Purchase produce and other perishable items
- Mix cocktail base; chill overnight
- Set out plates, cups, glassware, flatware, table linens and menu cards

DAY OF PARTY:

- Pick up pastries, baguettes and sweets
- Assemble sandwiches and salad
- Prepare hot chocolate bar
- Set out pastries
- Sample a cocktail

For more recipes, decorating tips and a complete party shopping list, visit phillymaghome.com.



Hot Chocolate Bar

White cocoa: Bellagio Gourmet White Hot Cocoa (\$4.39 at Food Source, Bryn Mawr)

Dark cocoa: Green & Black's Organic Hot Chocolate (\$6.27 at Food Source)

Prepare both according to package instructions. Serve in thermal coffee pitchers.

Sugars: Combine zest of one orange with granulated white sugar to make orange-scented sugar. Serve in small bowl, alongside small bowls of dark muscovado sugar (\$5.95 at Adriana's Caravan, Ardmore), rock candy (\$.50 each at Nancy's Candy Corner, Wayne) and handcrafted marshmallows (\$18.50 at Williams-Sonoma, multiple locations).

