

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
**SAVORIES**

Mom's Mushroom Turnovers

Mrs. Beebe's Crab Dip

Chicken Liver Terrine

Mrs. Erda's Artichoke Spread

Gougere  
with  
Smoked Salmon & Caviar

Stuffed Endive Spears

Bacon-Wrapped Dates

Homemade Herb Biscuits  
with

Chutney Trio & Assorted Chees

Olive "Wreath"



*Good Cheer*





A  
GREEN  
CHRISTMAS  
*“Homemade,”  
“Recycled,” and  
“Repurposed” Were  
the Watchwords at This  
Merry Holiday Open House.*

BY MARGARET BAUER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY GREG RANNELLS







Light streamed through the windows of Julia Usher and Dr. Bryan Meyers' Webster Groves home, its wide porch beckoning unto guests' chilly feet. A fully bedecked Christmas tree glowed at the door, ornaments swaying with the occasional gust. Standing in the foyer, Ms. Usher invited in a group of new arrivals, smiling widely, and took their coats.

"Hey, Merry Christmas! Hiiii! Hey, you look gorgeous!" she cried, greeting each in turn. Before long, more than two dozen neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family members were mingling in the kitchen, laughing together at shared stories and jokes, sampling delectables and wines, and rapidly getting to know one another. Dr. Meyers' medical colleagues (he's chief of thoracic surgery at Barnes-Jewish Hospital) and Ms. Usher's baking and food writing friends (she's a food writer and stylist) had little trouble finding common ground. Even newcomers to the couple's circle were quickly drawn into conversation—much of it concerning Ms. Usher's attractive home and delicious desserts.

Guests repeatedly returned to the room between the foyer and the kitchen to sample sweets from golden trays, clustered amid antique lace and golden boughs on the dessert table. The hostess, who was once a mechanical engineer, honed the

recipes for these delicacies—many of which appear in her new book, *Cookie Swap*, which hit No. 2 on Amazon.com this summer—through diligent testing at numerous cookie-swap events and years of work at her former bakery, AzucArte (a combination of the Spanish words for sugar, *azúcar*, and art, *arte*).

"Doesn't everything look good?" murmured Ms. Usher's mother, Carol. Like the desserts, the savory treats on hand had been a long time in development, based on heirloom recipes passed down the Usher family tree. Those curious could browse a set of Season's Greetings recipe cards in a little red box on the counter. A tray of homemade salsa and apple butter, canned just a few months earlier, reflected Dr. Meyers' green thumb. Guests testified that during the warm months, his garden's bounty is enviable.

The couple's home is a study in creative reuse, exemplifying a hardy New England frugality, with distressed cabinetry and pendant lamps made from retrofitted, industrial-size whisks. On this particular evening, vintage ornaments, costume jewelry, books, and postcards peeked out of every corner, amid shining candles and winter greenery. Candies could be found nestled into a World War II-era Shiny-Brite ornament box, and even the basket bearing guests' wrapped gifts—an antique shopping cart, the metal dark with age—had been



## Details

### HOSTS

Julia Usher and her husband, Dr. Bryan Meyers

### LOCATION

The couple's home, Webster Groves

### GUESTS

Carol Usher; Barb and Steve Adams; Shawn and Mike Blaes; Felicia and Dr. Traves Crabtree and their children, Ellie, Abby, and Jakob; Dr. Gokhan Ergene; Dr. Xiang-Yan Liu; Helen and Mike Fletcher; Frances and Dr. Bill Gay; Dr. Laureen

and Mica Hill; Drs. Friederike and Dan Kreisel and their children, Sarah and Stella; Shauna and Dr. Sasha Krupnick; Ann Huston; Dr. Charles Roper; and Jane and Richard Winter





**Ooh La La!**  
HOME FURNISHINGS

17201 Edison Ave., Chesterfield MO, 63005  
636.532.3353  
oohlahahomefurnishings.com

  
**Jules L. Pass**  
Antiques, Ltd.

9916 Clayton Road, Saint Louis, Missouri 63124 • (314)991-1522

*"The Finest in European Antiques"*



# THE FIRST AT HOME<sup>St. Louis</sup> READERS' DESIGN CONTEST

DO YOU HAVE THE EYE?  
DO YOUR FRIENDS & FAMILY  
RAVE ABOUT THE  
DÉCOR OF YOUR HOME?

Well, pull out your digital  
cameras and get to work.

We are holding the first  
ever AT HOME Readers'  
Design Contest. We're  
starting small and focusing  
on just one room.

**3 CATEGORIES:**  
**MAKEOVER**  
**GUT REHAB**  
**NEW CONSTRUCTION**

Visit [stlmagathome.com](http://stlmagathome.com)  
for details and entry form.  
Email both description  
and pictures to that website.

**DEADLINE**  
**DECEMBER 15, 2009**

A panel of professional  
designers will judge the entries.  
Winners will be announced in  
the March/April 2010 AT HOME.



given a second chance at life.

Soon, Ms. Usher circulated among those gathered, encouraging each to pluck an old-fashioned numbered tag from a bright-red stocking, Scrabble-style. The metal-rimmed tags would denote the order of the evening's Yankee gift swap, an East Coast custom in which each guest chooses a gift to unwrap, then has the option of either keeping it or swapping it for a previously unwrapped gift. "We've done it up in Maine, where we have another house," said Ms. Usher. But they hadn't yet held one here. "We'll see how it works!"

Once everyone had gathered in the kitchen, the children's hallway twirling calmed, Ms. Usher began calling out numbers for the gift swap. The bearer of tag No. 1 picked first—and would also get last choice of the unwrapped items at evening's end.

Even those who would normally never consider lifting a gift from a child's hands were quickly emboldened by the game: A beautiful sand globe, opened early on by one of the youngest girls, changed hands several times before being traded for later on by a parent.

Guests crowded over each gift—a beautifully embroidered throw pillow, a gold-lacquered gourd birdhouse, a thick cookbook, a sparkling set of sun-catching ornaments, a brand-new set of kitchen tools—and cheekily bartered amongst themselves. Laughter rang out at a gift unsuited to its new owner or a particularly daring swap.

As the pile of presents dwindled, ownership established, the couple looked at each other and grinned. The Yankee gift swap had captured their guests' hearts—and delighted their spirits.

## Menu

### SAVORIES

Mom's Mushroom Turnovers  
Mrs. Beebe's Crab Dip  
Chicken Liver Terrine  
Mrs. Erda's Artichoke Spread  
Gougère With Smoked Salmon  
and Caviar  
Stuffed Endive Spears  
Bacon-Wrapped Dates

Homemade Herb Biscuits, With  
Chutney Trio and Cheeses  
Olive Wreath  
End-of-the-Garden Salsa

### SWEETS

Golden Fruitcake Nuggets  
Gingersnap Thumbprints  
Figgy Pudding Bars

Cardamom Shortbread  
Chocolate-Raspberry Truffle  
Deer Isle Gingerbread With  
Rhubarb Cream  
Anise-Scented Sugar Cookies  
Earl Grey Crème Caramel  
Ferrero Rocher Chocolates  
Bryan's Apple Butter



## Recipes

### SAVORIES

#### MRS. ERDA'S ARTICHOKE SPREAD

Makes about 3 cups

- 1 8-ounce can artichoke hearts, drained
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 cup Parmesan cheese, freshly grated

Combine all ingredients in medium ovenproof dish or saucepan. Heat to bubbling in preheated 350-degree oven or on stovetop. Serve warm with crackers.

#### MRS. BEEBE'S CRAB DIP

Makes 4 to 5 cups

- 1 pound fresh crabmeat
- 2 8-ounce packages cream cheese, room temperature
- 1/4 cup mayonnaise
- 1/4 cup grated yellow onion, or to taste
- Dash Tabasco sauce
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper to taste

Combine all ingredients in medium ovenproof dish or saucepan. Heat to bubbling in preheated 350-degree oven or on stovetop. Serve warm with crackers.

#### MOM'S MUSHROOM TURNOVERS

- 1/2 cup and 3 tablespoons unsalted butter, softened
- 1 large yellow onion, finely chopped
- 1/2 pound mushrooms, finely chopped
- 1 1/2 cups and 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/4 cup sour cream
- Fresh thyme, to taste
- 1/2 teaspoon salt, plus a pinch
- Freshly ground black pepper, to taste
- 3 3-ounce packages cream cheese, softened

Melt 3 tablespoons butter in skillet over medium heat. Add onions and cook until lightly browned. Add mushrooms and cook another 3 minutes. Reduce heat to low; add 2 tablespoons flour and the sour cream. Cook until thickened. Stir in thyme, 1/2 teaspoon salt, and pepper. Cover and chill until ready to use.

Mix together remaining 1 1/2 cups flour, a pinch of salt, cream cheese, and remaining butter. Flatten dough into disk, wrap in plastic, and chill at least 30 minutes.

Preheat oven to 450 degrees. Line two or more cookie sheets with parchment paper. Roll dough on lightly floured surface to 1/8-inch thickness; cut into 3-inch rounds. Top each with 1 teaspoon filling, fold in half, and seal edges by pressing with fork. Prick holes in top of each turnover with a fork and bake about 15 minutes or until lightly browned on bottom. Serve warm.

**THE DECK & FENCE STORE**

[www.dfstore.com](http://www.dfstore.com)

**Two Great Companies  
One Great Location**

**WHOLESALE LANDSCAPE SUPPLY**

[www.wlstw.com](http://www.wlstw.com)



Decking \* Fencing \* Gazebos  
Pergolas \* Shade Structures

Retaining Walls \* Patio Pavers  
Natural Stone \* Edging \* Gravel



Showroom With Over 5 Acres  
of Indoor/Outdoor Displays  
and Inventory!

Design Assistance  
Delivery Services  
Financing Available

Call (636) 861-3323 for your **FREE IN-HOME ESTIMATE**  
Visit our showroom at 106 South Elam Ave., Valley Park, MO 63088



**DIRECTIONS  
IN DESIGN, INC.**

**DD**

COMMERCIAL | RESIDENTIAL  
RENOVATION | NEW CONSTRUCTION

314-205-2010 [WWW.DIDINC.COM](http://WWW.DIDINC.COM)  
1849 CRAIG ROAD, ST. LOUIS, MO 63146



*The White Hare*  
Decor & More

**Unique Home Decor & Gifts**  
Custom Floral Design ~ In-home Accessorizing  
Over 4000 square feet of treasures for you & your home!

Camps ~ Arrwork ~ Candles ~ Candleholders  
Accent Furniture ~ Wall Decor  
Floral stems ~ Arrangements ~ Wreaths  
Crabtree & Evelyn ~ Gifts ~ Jewelry ~ Trunks  
Address Plaques ~ Monogram Items  
Seasonal ~ Picture Frame ~ Holiday  
Personalized Stamps ~ Decorating classes

3070 Wingham Blvd  
O'Fallon, MO 63368  
Only 10 minutes from Chesterfield  
636-561-4611

[www.TheWhiteHare.com](http://www.TheWhiteHare.com)







**Supper's almost ready!**

scratch cooking • home essentials • espresso bar  
wine & gifts • breakfast • lunch • dinner • desserts  
weekend brunch • catering

7213 Delmar • St. Louis MO 63130 • 314.725.7559  
Tuesday - Friday: 7- 9 • Saturday: 8-9 • Sunday: 8-4  
Closed Monday • [www.winslowshome.com](http://www.winslowshome.com)



### GOUGÈRE (MINI SAVORY PUFFS)

- 1 cup water
- ½ cup (1 stick) unsalted butter, cut into small pieces
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 1 cup all-purpose flour, sifted
- 4 large eggs
- 1 large egg yolk (for egg wash)
- 3 tablespoons milk (for egg wash)
- Smoked fish spread or filling of choice

Generously butter two cookie sheets, then rinse them under cold water. Shake off excess water. Preheat oven to 400 degrees.

Combine water, butter, and salt in medium saucepan, and bring to rolling boil. (Make sure all butter has melted.) Remove from heat and stir in flour. Return pan to medium heat, and dry paste 7 to 10 minutes, stirring constantly. Remove from heat. Cool slightly, then stir in eggs one at a time. Pour dough into pastry bag fitted with ½-inch round tip, and pipe 1- to 1½-inch mounds about 2 inches apart on prepared cookie sheets.

Whisk together egg yolk and milk. Lightly brush mixture atop each mound.

Bake 20 to 25 minutes until mounds are very puffy and lightly browned. Pierce side of each puff with toothpick or cake tester in last 5 to 10 minutes of baking to dry insides of puffs. Cool completely before filling.

Cut each puff in half. Fill with 1 to 2 tablespoons smoked fish spread or filling of choice. Puffs best served soon after filling, or they will get soggy.

### SWEETS

#### PANFORTE PIECES

Makes about two dozen 1½-inch squares

Adapted from *Cookie Swap*

- 1 cup whole hazelnuts, toasted, skins rubbed off, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup blanched, slivered almonds, toasted and coarsely chopped
- 1 cup candied orange peel, coarsely chopped
- 1 cup citron, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons crystallized ginger, finely chopped
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest, finely grated
- ½ cup and 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1¼ teaspoons ground cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon ground cardamom
- ⅜ teaspoon ground coriander
- ⅜ teaspoon ground cloves

*Catering with Style*



Sherrill Gonterman,  
President



314.647.5350  
[WWW.LACHEF.COM](http://WWW.LACHEF.COM)

**Holiday Caviar Pate Tarts** (yield: 12 tarts)



12 Each, 2" Tart Shells, baked \*\*\*  
¼ Cup Pate, smooth variety  
½ Cup Cream Cheese, softened  
1 tsp. Ranch Dressing Seasoning  
2 Whole Eggs, hard boiled  
1 Green Onion  
1 ½ tsp. Caviar, black or red  
\*\*\* can use pie crust

Spread pate into tart shells. Mix ranch seasoning and cream cheese together. Spread evenly on top of pate. Pass the egg whites and yolks separately through a fine mesh strainer. Cover half the tart with the egg whites and the other half with the egg yolks. Slice the green onion diagonally to make long thin rings. Pat the caviar dry. Top tarts with a spoonful of caviar and 3 green onion rings. Chill and serve the same day.  
**Great for the holidays.**

**CATERING & EVENT SPECIALIST**  
Sign up for our mailing list to receive recipes and party ideas.



1/2 teaspoon freshly grated nutmeg  
 Pinch ground white pepper  
 3/4 cup granulated sugar  
 3/4 cup honey  
 2 tablespoons unsalted butter, cut into  
 tablespoon-size pieces  
 Powdered sugar (for dusting cookie bottoms)

Line bottom and sides of 9-inch square baking pan with parchment paper. Affix paper with a bit of butter in each pan corner. (Avoid excessive pan greasing, which will make it difficult to remove bars later.) Lightly coat paper with nonstick cooking spray, and set pan aside.

Put rack in center of oven; preheat to 300 degrees.

Mix nuts, candied orange peel, citron, crystallized ginger, lemon zest, flour, spices, and pepper in large bowl, breaking apart fruit or ginger pieces stuck together.

Place granulated sugar and honey in 3-quart saucepan. Stir until sugar is evenly moistened, then add butter pieces. Place mixture over medium to medium-high heat, and bring to gentle boil. Reduce heat to low and cook, stirring occasionally, until syrup registers 246 to 248 degrees on candy thermometer. (Syrup will be ready when a small drop forms a firm yet malleable ball in ice



water.) Immediately pour over fruit-flour mixture, and stir until well-blended. Work quickly or syrup will cool and stiffen, making mixture difficult to spread. Transfer batter to prepared pan, and spread to uniform thickness with small offset spatula.

Bake 40 to 42 minutes or until bubbly and lightly browned around edges but soft in the center. (Batter will harden considerably as it cools.) Transfer pan to a wire rack, and let fruitcake cool completely in pan.

Invert pan onto cutting board. If fruitcake doesn't fall out on its own, loosen by running small knife along the edge and rapping pan against your work surface. Peel parchment paper off fruitcake and invert, so top faces up. Using a sharp knife, trim fruitcake block to a perfect square, then cut into 1 1/2-inch squares.

Store in airtight container lined with parchment paper. Dust cookie bottoms with powdered sugar to prevent sticking, and do not stack. Cookies can be stored five to seven days. **AH**

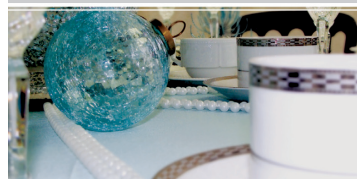


ON [STLMAGATHOME.COM](http://STLMAGATHOME.COM): MORE RECIPES; PARTY & DESSERT PICS



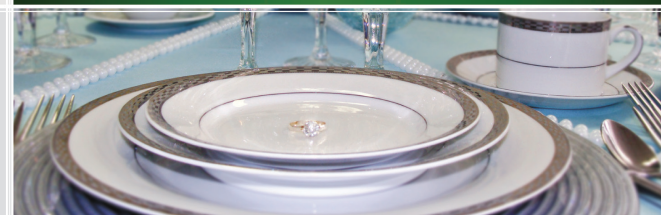
*When it comes to the finishing touches for your party, we have you covered.*

The Luxurious Linen Collection from Weinhardt.



*Weinhardt*

The Party Professionals Since 1946.



Ask us how we can serve you:

Tables  
 Chairs  
 Linens  
 Tents  
 Fountains  
 China  
 Dance Floors  
 Flatware  
 Glassware

West County  
 (314) 822-9000  
 11601 Manchester Road,  
 Des Peres, MO 63131

South City  
 (314) 822-9000  
 5901 Elizabeth Avenue,  
 St. Louis, MO 63110

Monday-Friday 8:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. & Saturday 8:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

*Charming Wooden  
Advent  
Calendars!*

*SIGN of the ARROW*

*Benefiting charities since 1966*

9740 CLAYTON ROAD  
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI 63124

314.994.0606

[www.signofthearrow.com](http://www.signofthearrow.com)

