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Book review

If you're in the mood to browse through a book that will make you feel happy and ready for the holidays, I recommend Alexandra and Eliot Angle's "Cocktail Parties With a Twist" (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, \$30). The couple, founders of Aqua Vitae, an event catering company and interior design service in L.A., have filled their book with wonderful ideas for entertaining that will leave you with the feeling that it might actually be fun to throw a party. The book is packed with great photos (by Ericka McConnell) — not just of the dishes for which recipes are given, but of people at parties having a great time.

Clearly, the authors had a blast writing this book, dreaming up strategies for how to throw the perfect bash and giving us plenty of recipes for tempting hors d'oeuvres. There's plenty of practical advice on stocking a bar and planning ahead on the cooking. We learn how to make the party space look bigger (use your bed as a coatrack, or if you

live in a studio apartment, cover the bed with a heavy cloth and lots of pillows to create a three-sided couch).

The drinks outlined here are fun to serve: There's a mango margarita made with either fresh mango or mango puree, kiwi whisky sours and a punch prepared with madeira, green tea, rum and cognac. The food is celebratory

without being too fussy, and much of it is easy enough to do in advance.

For instance, the roasted pepper and feta

canapes may be partially prepared ahead of time so

they'll be ready when guests arrive, and the cranberry-almond biscotti actually tasted better on the second day.

One of the best things about the book is the simple, basic advice on how to be a great host. They suggest, for instance, that you offer guests a drink right away, or walk them to the bar if it's self-service and immediately introduce them to someone. Above all, relax and smile — enjoy yourself, or no one else will! With this book as a guide, it's truly possible to have fun at your own party.

Rosemary Black



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