

# Savor

## WineCountry

SEASONAL FESTIVITIES

HOLIDAY HAPPENINGS



# The ART of ENTERTAINING

Experts offer tips, tricks and recipes on how to shine at party time in Wine Country

STORIES BY VIRGINIE BOONE PHOTOGRAPHS BY CHARLIE GESELL

The Wine Country is an exalted place for food and wine, and the holidays an exalted time to indulge. But when it comes to holiday entertaining, some of us just fumble through the motions, lucky that we're here and can naturally piece together so many good things. For others, putting together a beautiful table, extraordinary hors d'oeuvres, the right wines and a perfect meal is an art already mastered. We need them; and just like the angel Clarence for despairing George Bailey, they're here to show us a better way.

### Sandra Jordan

Jordan Winery's Sandra Jordan has made it her life's work to provide ideas and accoutrements for hosting friends and family around the table.

This includes the reassurance that a meal doesn't have to be fancy to be enjoyable. Casual yet elegant entertaining is her goal. Jordan is an advocate of us-

ing what's already around one's home and garden to decorate a table. Nor is she averse to the finer things in life. In fact, Jordan's calling is about blending the simple with the sublime — taking a leaf from her own backyard to inspire the creation of a silver wine accessory or ceramic serving plate.

As inspired as she is by the visual, Jordan also appreciates the stories that often accompany the foods, wines and even serving bowls, silverware and decanters that make up a festive table. That's been true since she was a girl in Peru, precociously fascinated with the artisan silversmiths, potters, furniture makers and weavers in and around Lima.

"There's simply no substitute for handcrafted items," Jordan says. "They evoke texture, warmth and luxury. You appreciate their quality and each item's individual qualities every time you touch it."

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### PARTY PROS' TIPS ON PAGES 56-57

LESLIE SBROCCO

Left, author of "Wine for Women"

SANDRA JORDAN

Right, owner of Jordan Winery, Healdsburg

CATHERINE BERGEN

Proprietor of Tulocay's Made in Napa Valley food company

ERIC LEE

Chef at Simi Winery, Healdsburg

ELAINE BELL

Elaine Bell Catering



## RECIPES

# Jordan Cabernet Poached Figs

From the island of Mauritius off the coast of Africa, Demerara sugar has long been enjoyed in Europe, but has only recently become available in gourmet markets in the United States. It is an all-natural, unrefined sugar.

This recipe is from chef Udo Nechutnys of Jordan Winery.

Makes 6 servings

- 6 cups Cabernet Sauvignon
- 1 cup Demerara sugar
- 1 vanilla bean, split
- 18 ripe black Mission figs, peeled

Combine all ingredients except figs, bringing to a simmer over medium heat for 10 minutes.

Cool poaching liquid in an ice bath to bring to room temperature.

Add peeled figs and allow to marinate for at least 1 hour before serving.

To serve, ladle 3 ounces of the poaching liquid and three of the figs per person.

Also wonderful with vanilla ice cream.



Jordan Cabernet  
Poached Figs

## RECIPES

# Savory Pumpkin Maple Custard

This recipe is from Elaine Bell of Elaine Bell Catering.

Makes 18 servings in 4-ounce ramekins

- 1 14-ounce can of pumpkin
- 1 2-inch shallot, diced finely
- 2 2-inch pieces of fresh ginger root, chopped
- 2 cloves of garlic, chopped finely
- 1 cup maple syrup
- 4 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- Salt and pepper to taste

Lightly beat eggs. Whisk in milk and pumpkin. Combine rest. Pour into buttered ramekins until  $\frac{3}{4}$  full. Bake in a water bath at 350 degrees for about 1 hour.

Jordan excels at creating comfortable yet decorative settings for every type of gathering, from a formal Christmas dinner to an impromptu patio luncheon, from the grounds of her 100-year-old clapboard farmhouse in Healdsburg.

There, Jordan is particularly proud of her organic kitchen garden, from which on-site chefs Udo Nechutnys, formerly of Maxim's in Paris and Yountville's Domaine Chandon, and Todd Knoll, of the Ritz-Carlton in San Francisco, pick at will, creating varying menus for both the Jordan household and Jordan Winery's by-appointment tasting room.

"The key to success when planning your own table settings is to mark the sea-

son at the table, and build a plan around the menu," says chef Nechutnys, who has been at the helm for many of Jordan's memorable parties. "Pick a particular element of your menu and work around it. Experiment. Mix your porcelain, glassware, wood and pottery with each course. Try out different place settings first to see how it looks. Have fun. Dining should be entertainment for all the senses."

In addition to the fruits, vegetables, herbs and cut flowers out of her garden — Jordan is especially partial to white asparagus, whose spears must be grown in the absence of light — Jordan and her staff make their own balsamic vinegar, olive oil, tea and honey, and even raise escargots in a wood-covered terrarium, where the slow-movers feast on carrots and cucumber before meeting their fates.

And then there are the wines. Jordan Winery is a notable producer of Cabernet Sauvignon and Chardonnay, and Jordan's collection of objets includes a series of wine-related art, embroidery, furniture and silver.

"Fine wines deserve the best possible presentation," she says. "A finely made red wine will taste even better, and the drama will be heightened, if decanted through a silver wine funnel into a graceful decanter, and then sipped from the thinnest of stemmed crystal glasses. The gleam of silver, the sparkle of the fine crystal and the ruby color of the wine combine to heighten anticipation."



CRISTA JEREMIASON

Caterer Elaine Bell's pumpkin custard.

# Entertaining tips from the pros

## SANDRA JORDAN

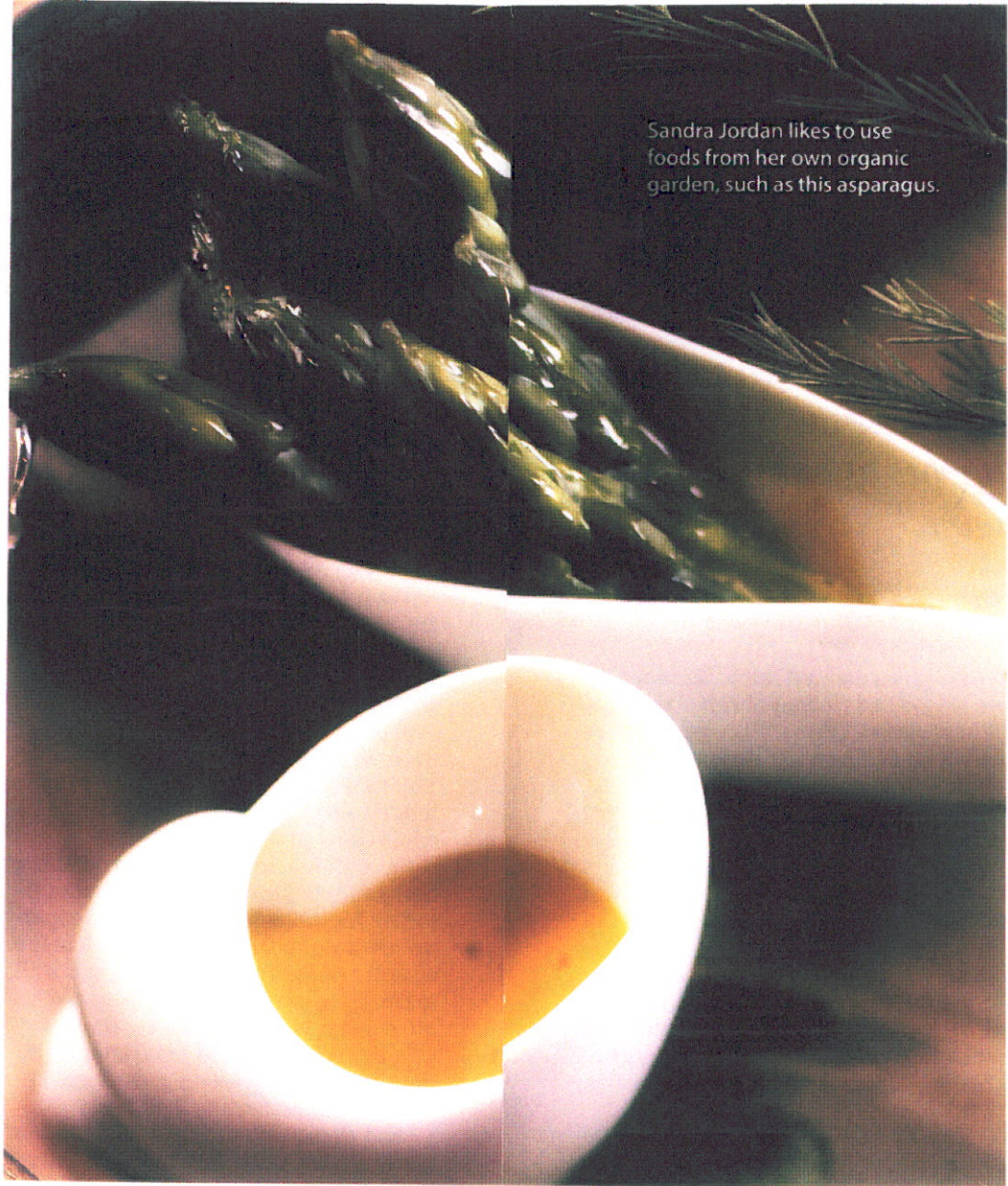
**Entertain all the senses:** When setting your table, bring together different textures and colors to create a visual and tactile feast.

**Delight your guests with the unexpected:** Host a formal dinner in nature's theater for a truly memorable meal.

**Bring the outside in:** Incorporate organic elements in your presentation to truly capture the essence of the season.

**Captivate your guests with stories:** Share the history behind meaningful dishes and serving pieces.

**Juxtapose simple and ornate elements:** Consider mixing humble plant material, like rose hips or grass, with elegant crystal and fine silver.



Sandra Jordan likes to use foods from her own organic garden, such as this asparagus.