

THE SOCIAL SEEN

Training our eye on
Kentuckians out and about

Party mavens make it look easy

But entertaining
is work, they say

By Beverly Fortune

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No matter whether it's California wine country or Kentucky horse country, entertaining can be as much a business as a pleasure.

Anita Madden, whose family owns Hamburg Place, raised millions of dollars for Bluegrass Boys Ranch and helped promote the thoroughbred industry with her extravagant and legendary Derby Eye parties in the 1980s and '90s.

California vintners **Barbara Banke** and **Peggy Furth** partnered in 2004 to organize Imagine, a wine auction that in three years became the third-largest in the country. Banke is an owner of Jackson Wine Estates, which includes Kendall-Jackson and 23 other brands. Furth is co-owner of Chalk Hill Estate Vineyard. In 2006, the event raised \$2.2 million for various children's organizations in the Sonoma Valley area.

On Thursday, at a tented luncheon at **Meg Jewett's** elegant L.V. Harkness & Co. shop on West Short Street, a group of women — some from wine country, others from horse country — gathered for "An Entertaining Exchange" to talk about their strategies for entertaining. It was made possible by the convenient timing of the races at Keeneland and the Fall Wine Celebration & Auction on Friday night, sponsored by the Lexington Foundation.

The luncheon wasn't all serious, but it wasn't all fluff either.

A few tips, whether you're having a few guests or a few hundred:

■ Go beyond the usual lineup of people. "Mix it up. Get some unexpected people in there. It makes it more fun," said **Jill Young**, whose California advertising firm Young/Wells boasts a stellar list of clients, including Levi Strauss and Jordan Vineyard and Winery.

■ Hang loose and serve lots of wine, said Banke, a former trial lawyer. An advocate of sustainable agriculture, Banke raises heirloom tomatoes — in addition to grapes — and last month, she hosted the 11th annual Kendall-Jackson Heirloom Tomato Festival, which raises money for the School Garden Network in Sonoma County, Calif. She also is the author of the *Heirloom Tomato Cookbook*. She and husband **Jess Jackson** own Stonestreet Farm



PHOTOS BY ANGELA BALDRIDGE

M.J. Rodgers of New York, left, who owns property in Kentucky, chatted with Lexington's Connie Jo Miller, center and Anita Madden before the luncheon got under way.



Vintners all, Sandra Jordan, left, and Peggy Furth, right, leaned in to talk while fellow panelist Barbara Banke surveyed the crowd.



Chefs Udo Nechutnys and John Martin served lunch in Japanese bento boxes wrapped in toile fabric napkins.

"People love to take something home," George said. "They like something of the hand."

With microphone in hand, George made an intriguing offer that drew strong applause: "Anita, I wish you would do a party again. Maybe we could share duties and do it together," she said, adding, "But only if Mrs. Bell would emcee it."

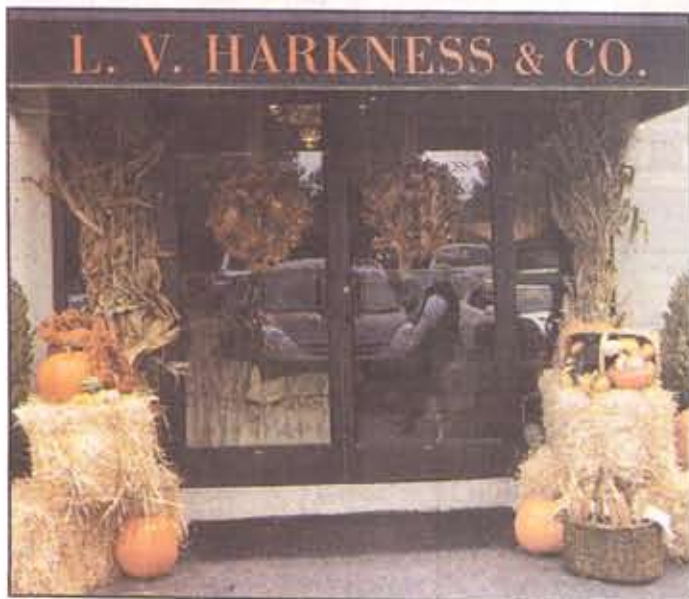
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in Kentucky.

■ "Stay calm on top; paddle like hell underneath," said **Jessica Bell**, thoroughbred breeder and former owner of Jonabell Farm. That advice brought an appreciative laugh from the audience.

Others who shared entertaining stories were Furth; **Sandra Jordan**, designer of the Sandra Jordan Collection of wine-country home items; **Neal Vaughan**, a generous benefactor and guiding hand behind Chrysalis House; and Jewett.

Among guests was former Kentucky first lady **Phyllis George**, who entertained graciously and often while her then-husband, **John Y. Brown Jr.**, was governor. George is credited with promoting Kentucky crafts, giving an enormous boost to that cottage industry as it was getting started. Guests left her parties with small gifts, always a Kentucky-made item.



L.V. Harkness & Co. hosted "An Entertaining Exchange."