

House & Garden

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fashion at home



the power
of red
in carolina herrera's
new house

cocktail hour

A chic, intimate cocktail party is the little black dress of entertaining. So when I have friends over for drinks, I keep it simple and elegant, pouring classic apéritifs like chilled Spanish sherry, Lillet, and champagne, and serving savory hors d'oeuvres that require minimal preparation. Marinated olives, salted almonds roasted at home, and Gail Monaghan's brilliant curry biscuits are sophisticated alternatives to the misguided cheese platter. Instead of offering crudités, I put out salted edamame (soybeans) or sliced fennel on a bed of crushed ice. Finally, I take extra care with presentation—my glass ice bucket from Hervé Baume in Avignon (011-33-1-4-90-86-37-66) makes bottles sparkle. And vintage cloth cocktail napkins, which I collect at flea markets and antiques shops, make even the simplest foods—like saucisson from Lyons—seem special, bon.



Apéritifs please the palate and stimulate the appetite for the meal ahead. Two gorgeous party drinks are white **Lillet** on ice with a slice of orange and **Campari** on ice with a splash of San Pellegrino and a wedge of lime.

Nuts are essential cocktail party fare. **Pistachios** from A.L. Bazzini in New York (212-334-1280; 800-228-0172) are my favorite.

I toss **blanched almonds** with butter and sea salt and toast them on a baking sheet until lightly browned. **Dark almonds** mixed with olive oil, chopped fresh rosemary, and salt also gain an edge from 8 to 10 minutes in the oven.

Emilio Lustau **dry Spanish sherry** is crisp and delicious paired with salty food. I keep it cold in a large Hôtel Silver **wine bucket** from Bergdorf Goodman (in NYC, 212-753-7300), with chilled sterling-silver Tiffany shot glasses at the ready.

Instead of using fragile stemware, I choose **tumblers** in different sizes, like these Elsa Peretti thumb-print glasses from Tiffany & Co. (800-526-0649).

I keep 3 or 4 bags of **edamame** (available at most Japanese groceries) on hand in the freezer. Boiled for 3 minutes, chilled in cold water, and then tossed with coarse salt, they are the perfect finger food.

So silky that it doesn't need crème fraîche or butter, Robert Morris's **smoked salmon** (in S.F., 650-588-7111; www.Morrisismokedfish.com) is heavenly on a dense multigrain wheat bread with a little dill.

Picholine olives are even more flavorful and aromatic after I marinate them overnight in olive oil, crushed garlic, orange peel, and sprigs of fresh rosemary.

Pile a silver plate high with sliced hard sausages: **saucisson** from Lyons and sweet cured Italian **saprossata**.

For piquant **bruscetta**, I top toasted baguette rounds with fresh salsas from Native Kjalii Foods (in S.F., 415-641-5808; www.sfsalsa.com). The fire-roasted papaya-mango blend is divine.

I love to serve food in glass, and the **Pomfret bowls** from Simon Pearce (in NYC, 212-334-2393) are discreet canvases for any kind of hors d'oeuvre.

The rich spice of Gail Monaghan's **curry biscuits** from Shi (in NYC, 212-334-4330) is a lively counterpoint to champagne.

