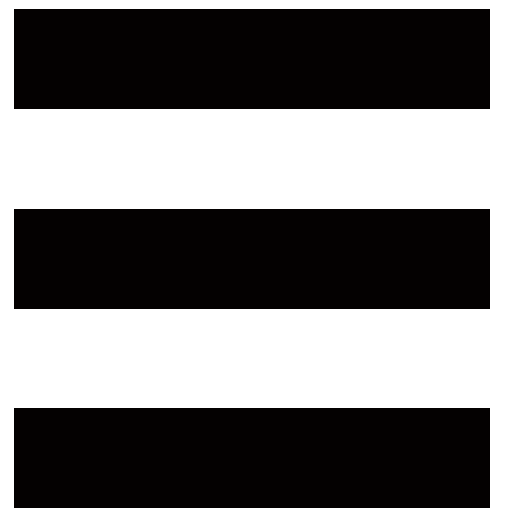




Dinner on the Deck



Myrf Bowry shares her love of entertaining during weekly al fresco dinner parties

By JESSICA RONKY HADDAD
Photos by TYLER DARDEN

The disco ball that hangs from the ceiling of Myrf Bowry's Fan District kitchen says it all: This woman likes to party. Bowry, an interior designer, lives to entertain, inviting friends — and sometimes virtual strangers — to join her for a series of weekly warm-weather parties she calls “Dinner on the Deck.” ▶



Menu

- Sparkling grapefruit punch
- Basil cocktail
- Prosciutto cups with goat cheese, fig jam and arugula
- Roasted salmon with grapefruit and shallot sauce
- Candied pancetta stacks with peaches and fresh mozzarella
- Smashed potatoes
- Sautéed asparagus and snap peas
- Meringues with whipped cream and berries



FAR LEFT: A festive table sets the tone for a fun dinner party. Bowry created the hanging centerpiece from a pizza pan and chain. **LEFT:** Myrf Bowry in her Fan District kitchen **ABOVE:** Bowry converted a closet into a storage area for china and linens. **BELOW:** This prosciutto and goat cheese appetizer looks impressive but is simple to make. See page 66 for the recipe.



No two parties are the same, with different guest lists, seasonal menus and table settings. Bowry even created an Instagram account (@dinneronthedeck) last February to document her entertaining prowess.

"I love cooking, and I love sharing food," she says. "Food is probably my love language. It makes me feel happy to see others enjoying my cooking."

Bowry usually kicks off the outdoor entertaining season with an Easter brunch. Parties can be impromptu after-work weeknight gatherings with guests invited via text, or more elaborate Saturday-night affairs with ambitious menus and hand-written invitations.

Past themes have included a party for National Rosé Day (the second Saturday in June), a paella party after Bowry was inspired by a trip to Portugal, and a game night. During hot summer nights, guests often end up in her plunge pool. "I have a collection of suits in all sizes for guests who forget theirs, so there is no excuse for not getting in the pool," she says.

On a recent Wednesday night she hosted a party for friend Megan Marconyak and the team supporting her in her campaign for Leukemia & Lymphoma Society's Woman of the Year.

Bowry enjoys mixing up her guest lists and



ABOVE: Bowry always serves a signature cocktail. This basil cocktail was garnished with edible pansy ice cubes as a festive touch. Recipe on page 66. **BELOW:** Guests are invited to serve themselves sparking grapefruit punch, with or without Champagne. **RIGHT:** Cloudlike meringues, homemade whipped cream and fresh berries are a simple seasonal dessert. Recipe on page 66.



loves to invite people who do not all know each other. “I will meet new people and will think about who else I can invite to introduce them to,” she says. She looks for a common interest or acquaintance and trusts that her guests will be open to making new friends.

Bowry, a partner in local interior design firm Decorum, gives as much attention to the table setting, flowers and other details as she does to the food.

She owns a large collection of serving pieces, fine china, antique glassware and table linens. She converted an upstairs closet into a walk-in china cupboard and installed pull-out drawers under her stairs to store her entertaining supplies.

Her love for entertaining has even led to a side business. Bowry, along with Decorum partner Leah Dodge, worked together to design, manufacture and market Dip-a-di-do-da, a collection of decorative containers for store-bought dips.

When Bowry remodeled her kitchen five years ago, she did it with a focus on entertaining.

“I wanted a big open area for flow because people always end up in the kitchen,” she says. She expanded the original kitchen into an addition on the side of the house, which now opens to a back deck where a long table invites guests to gather.

A built-in bookcase holds all of her cookbooks, and a second sink serves as both a wet bar and a flower-prep area. A large island holds appetizers when guests arrive. Dinner is usually served family style, on large platters that are brought to the table.

Preparation and a relaxed attitude are the keys to a successful party, Bowry says. “During the week I try to be super organized,” she says. “I will marinate a pork tenderloin overnight and just throw it on the grill.”

Most of the food she cooks is simple, using fresh, seasonal ingredients she purchased from the farmers market. She’s yet to experience a cooking disaster and says, “If something goes wrong, I make a joke and open more wine.”

While the thought of a weekly dinner party might induce anxiety in some, for Bowry, cooking is a way to relax. “My house is my shelter, but I want to share it with people,” she says. “I love when a party lasts until 3 a.m. — that means people are having fun here. Not that I want them all to last until 3 a.m.” *Recipes continued on p.66* 📖



ENTERTAINING TIPS

- 1 Make food that you have made before and are comfortable cooking. Don't try a complicated recipe on a table full of guests.
- 2 Play good music, turn down the lights and light candles. Bowry likes the Pandora channels. For late-night parties, she'll play Pitbull and turn on her disco ball.
- 3 Don't wait until your house is perfect, or perfectly clean to have people over. Just do a quick bathroom cleanup. People are not coming over to judge your house.
- 4 For dinner parties, keep the guest list to a dozen or fewer people. Ask someone to come a little early to help if you need it.
- 5 It's OK to buy some prepared items. Richmond's farmers markets are great resources. You don't have to make everything yourself — people don't care.
- 6 Be a relaxed hostess, and your guests will feel that. Fifteen to 20 minutes before guests arrive, take a deep breath, have a cocktail and have fun!

dinner on the deck *cont'd*

CRISPY PROSCIUTTO CUPS WITH GOAT CHEESE
(Makes 24)

INGREDIENTS

- 12 slices prosciutto
- ½ cup fig jam
- ½ cup soft goat cheese
- Baby arugula

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 350 degrees. Cut each slice of prosciutto in half. Press each half-slice of prosciutto into a cup of a mini-muffin tin. Bake for 15-20 minutes until prosciutto forms a crispy cup. Allow to cool slightly and remove cups from muffin tin. Fill each prosciutto cup with one teaspoon of goat cheese. Top each with 1 teaspoon of fig jam. Garnish each cup with a piece of baby arugula.

BASIL COCKTAIL

INGREDIENTS

- 10 basil leaves
- 1 ounce lemon juice
- 2 ounces of gin
- 2 to 3 ounces of simple syrup

DIRECTIONS

Put all ingredients in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake vigorously, then strain into a glass and garnish with a floral ice cube.

MERINGUES WITH WHIPPED CREAM AND FRESH BERRIES

INGREDIENTS

- 5 egg whites, room temperature
- Pinch of cream of tartar
- 1¼ cup superfine granulated sugar
- 1 pint raspberries
- 1 pint blackberries
- 1 pint strawberries

DIRECTIONS

Preheat oven to 175 degrees. Line baking sheets with parchment paper. Prepare a pastry bag with a large open-star tip. Whip egg whites until frothy, then add cream of tartar to mixture. Continue to beat until soft peaks form. With the mixer on, add sugar. Increase mixer speed and beat until stiff peaks form. Fill piping bag with meringue and pipe 2- to 3-inch nests onto a parchment-lined baking sheet. Bake until meringues are dry, approximately 90 minutes. When dry, turn off heat and allow meringues to cool in the oven. Fill with fresh berries and top with whipped cream.

WHIPPED CREAM INGREDIENTS

- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1 cup heavy whipping cream

DIRECTIONS

Chill a metal mixing bowl and whisk in the freezer for 15 minutes. Place the sugar



into the chilled mixing bowl and add the whipping cream. Whisk vigorously until the cream reaches stiff peaks. Store in an airtight container for up to 10 hours. Whisk again for 10 to 15 seconds before serving. ■

804.594.1911
www.owenowens.com



OWEN & OWENS
EVERY CLIENT MATTERS

15521 Midlothian Turnpike
Suite 300
Midlothian, Virginia 23113



JOE OWEN

Virginia Super Lawyers® 2019
General Litigation



MARY BURKEY OWENS

Virginia Super Lawyers® 2019
Family Law
Top 50 Women Attorneys in Virginia
Top 50 Attorneys in Richmond
Top 100 Attorneys in Virginia



SAM KAUFMAN

Virginia Super Lawyers® 2019
General Litigation



JULIE CILLO

Virginia Super Lawyers® 2019
Family Law
Top 50 Women Attorneys in Virginia
Top 50 Attorneys in Richmond
Top 100 Attorneys in Virginia



JEREMIAH YOURTH

Virginia Super Lawyers® 2019
Rising Star in Family Law

Owen & Owens is proud to announce that five of its attorneys were named as 2019 Virginia Super Lawyers®.

PERSONAL REPRESENTATION



FAMILY LAW



BUSINESS REPRESENTATION