



10, 9, 8, 7, 6...
FLOWER-SHOPPING
WITH PARTY
DESIGNER RAUL
AVILA. BELOW:
LAUREN PUZZLES
OVER THE SEATING.



DINNER FOR 85
BUDDAKAN, NOT
YET OPEN TO THE
PUBLIC, WAS
THE SCENE. LEFT:
THE BIRTHDAY
GIRL (IN WHITE
CHANEL) WITH
MODEL KAROLINA
KURKOVA.



the big three-oh

*Turning 30?
Make it a party!
William Norwich
celebrates in style
with Lauren Davis.*

Thirtieth-birthday parties are a kind of phenomenon these days. For baby boomers, turning 30 meant maybe a small dinner; otherwise it was an occasion to avoid. After all, wasn't that the generation told in their youth to trust no one over 30? But these days the baby boomers' children are pulling out all the stops.

"Thirty is the new 21," Lauren Davis said the day of her recent thirtieth-birthday party, a dinner held at restaurateur Stephen Starr's delicious and then-as-yet-unopened Buddakan, on lower Ninth Avenue in New York.

"People see 30 as the last chance to have a real blowout before they settle down, or at least perhaps should settle down," she laughed, shopping that morning for peonies and sweet peas with party designer Raul Avila at Gary Paige in the flower market on West Twenty-eighth Street. "For many people, their 20s are a decade of exploration and continued education, but come 30

you want to commit both career-wise and on a personal level."

To give a memorable thirtieth-birthday party, you really don't have to spend a fortune. Attach an iPod to some speakers, move the furniture aside, and have a little dance-and-dessert party. (Domestic champagne is fine.) Maybe friends will give a spaghetti supper at their house before your dance.

On a grander scale, theme parties, like the fine-feathered aforementioned fetes, are always popular. A theme party automatically suggests how to decorate, prepare a menu, and dress—salvation for a nervous hostess. Another category for

thirtieth-birthday entertaining is something akin to a "destination" party. For instance, Celerie Kemble's thirtieth was roller-skating at the Roxy.

Finding a novel venue her friends would long remember appealed to Lauren, too, but since it was a "school night," a Monday, she also sought a convenient destination. A friend told her about Buddakan, and although its interior was still *entertainer* > 163



AIR KISSES
LEFT: TINSLEY
MORTIMER (IN
PETER SOM).
RIGHT: JESSICA
JOFFEE (IN WHITE
CALVIN KLEIN)
AND MARGARET
BETTS (IN
VINTAGE CHLOÉ).





A TOAST!
LEFT: CANDICE LEVY (IN BLUE ZAC POSEN) AND CECILIA DE SOLA (IN ROLAND MOURET). ABOVE: PINK RANUNCULUS AND PROSECCO-AND-PASSION FRUIT COCKTAILS.

ZERO HOUR
LAUREN MAKES SURE EVERY DETAIL IS PERFECT.

JUST DESSERTS
THE CAKE: LEMON MERINGUE, LIME-CURD CRUST, AND ITALIAN BUTTER CREAM.

the menu

to start
tuna-tartare egg rolls
beef-and-lettuce cups
soup
crispy sweet-chili shrimp with
spiced lobster broth
main course
fillet of beef
Peking duck
glazed black cod

under construction when Lauren first visited the 16,000-square-foot space,

she was dazzled. Buddakan reminded her of the very cool trailer she had just seen for Sofia Coppola's upcoming fall movie *Marie Antoinette*, filmed at Versailles and starring Kirsten Dunst.

Buddakan's designer, Christian Liaigre—he did the Mercer Hotel and is working with André Balazs on a new luxury hotel project in Manhattan's Meatpacking District—happened to be at work in the restaurant when Lauren stopped by after flower-shopping to do the seating. (Matchmaking, Lauren said, was the thinking behind her seating plan.) Liaigre liked the comparison to the new Coppola film and said, in fact, his inspiration for Buddakan was “when the emperor of Siam went to see Louis Quatorze and all the chinoiserie that followed in France.”

In the same mood as the song “Age of Consent” by New Order that accompanies the trailer for *Marie Antoinette*, Lauren's beau, Andres Santo Domingo, created on his iPod a sound track he called “New Wave Versailles” for the party. Lauren found her Chanel dress, a confectionery pouf of

tulle, in the window at Bergdorf Goodman.

First cocktails on the street level at the restaurant's bar; then down the elegant staircase into the luxurious main dining room, some 85 friends supped on a sampling of Buddakan's modern, mouthwatering Asian cuisine, prepared by chef

Michael Schulson and served family style: tuna-tartare egg rolls, beef-and-lettuce cups, crispy sweet-chili shrimp with spiced lobster broth, fillet of beef, Peking duck, glazed black cod, and fried rice, to mention just a few dishes.

Before guests retreated to Buddakan's library for dessert—a lime-curd and crisp lemon gâteau people are still talking about—Lauren sent a cake to the table of one of her guests, the model Karolina Kurkova, whose birthday it also was.

Around midnight everyone went home. Well, almost. About three in the morning, Lauren's doorbell rang. A few friends who had stopped at Double Seven and Bungalow 8 after dinner thought some additional cheer was in order, and they arrived with Twinkies and candles, more sweets and more good wishes for the birthday girl. □

inspiration

make a wish

1) Thirty is not an age to be coy: Get the gift you really want. Lauren Davis's own number-one pick? A set of handmade Globe-Trotter luggage. Safari Colonial valise, \$1,080; globe-trotterltd.com. **2)** Be the star of your party. A gold-lace Lagerfeld Gallery confection takes you center stage. By special order; 011-331-55-42-75-51. **3)** Not quite sure how to achieve imperial Siam by way of Louis Quatorze for your own big night? Find inspiration in *Maison: Christian Liaigre*, \$41; amazon.com. **4)** Pretty pink peonies in a ruby-red vase look very new. Raul Avila bouquet; (212) 242-7673. **5)** Toast your adulthood (or delayed adolescence, as the case may be) with a rainbow array of handblown Murano-glass champagne flutes. \$425 for a set of six; mossonline.com.



1.



5.



2.



3.



4.