



WE ARE FAMILY

LEFT: AERIN LAUDER (SEATED CENTER) THREW A TRADITIONAL DINNER AT HER GRANDMOTHER ESTÉE'S NEW YORK TOWN HOUSE. RIGHT: LIYA KEBEDE, "FACE" OF LAUDER.



dinner for 60

starter

Irish smoked salmon

main course

Beef with homemade potato chips

Peas and carrots

dessert

Chocolate cake with ice cream



THE "A" LIST

ABOVE: MODEL CAROLYN MURPHY, "FACE" OF LAUDER. RIGHT: CHLOË SEVIGNY.



TABLE TALK

ESTÉE'S OWN PLATES WERE BROUGHT OUT. TOM FORD (FACING CAMERA, RIGHT) WAS HONORED FOR HIS NEW LAUDER FRAGRANCE LINE.



home again

Hosting a real party *chez vous* for the first time ever? If you're nervous, **William Norwich** writes, let family traditions be your guide.

Whether it happens in your 20s, 30s, or even 40s, there comes that seminal moment: You want to entertain at home.

But while the spirit may be willing, the process can be daunting—especially for perfectionists. Before you even begin to consider the scientific matter of boiling water or the nitty-gritty known

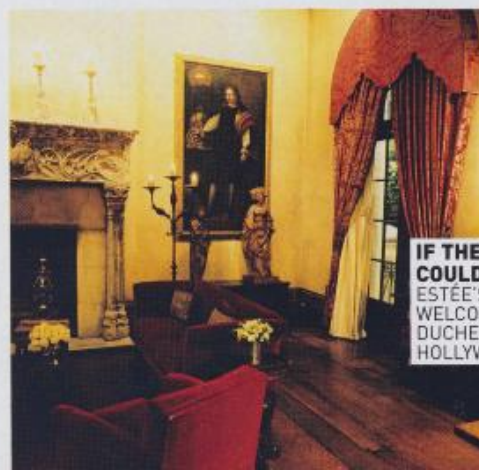
as pots and pans, it can be reassuring to consider one's roots and family traditions. How were things done at home when you were growing up? Was the food comforting or challengingly clever cuisine? Were your people too formal or too informal? Which of their methods will you keep? Discard? How will you evolve your own entertaining style from theirs?

Aerin Lauder's grandmother Es-

tée Lauder was one of the most commanding hostesses of the twentieth century, and in consideration of these entertaining questions (or, should I say, questions about entertaining?), Aerin has arrived at a personal style she calls "heritage with a twist." This is how she does it: traditional attention to good and easy food; beautiful flowers; and flattering lighting. Aerin mixes generations, children with parents, parents with grandparents, the young with the older.

When she entertains at her apartment in New York or her house on Long Island's East End, there is a short cocktail hour, about 30 to 40 minutes. "People work so hard nowadays, a long cocktail hour is unfair," she says. Then dinner is served buffet-style. A table is covered with a lavish offering of

"comfort foods"—delicious curries, say, or Lebanese cuisine *entertainer* >172



IF THESE WALLS COULD TALK

ESTÉE'S HOUSE HAS WELCOMED DUKES, DUCHESSES, AND HOLLYWOOD ROYALS.

served in the black-and-white Viennese serving bowls she found in the gift shop at the Neue Galerie in New York, a museum her family supports. Guests can sit wherever they want, "arrive late and leave early, or come early and leave late, very relaxed." Aerin might seat dinner only if it provides a unifying factor for a group of friends going off to something afterward—a dance at a favorite museum, for instance, or a concert.

Recently, on behalf of her entire family, including aunt and uncle Evelyn and Leonard Lauder and cousin William Lauder, Aerin organized a dinner for the designer Tom Ford in the elegant Upper East Side town house that had belonged to her late grandmother. It was the first party in the town house in many years. To make the evening a heritage-with-a-twist success, Aerin raked through Estée Lauder's menus and photographs of dinner parties past.

Mrs. Lauder's views on entertaining could fill magazines and books... and *did*, including a 1985 autobiography in which she mandated good lighting, bonhomie, chocolates, and vanilla ice cream. Princess Grace would be moved to tears at the Lauders' Christmas parties when the Salvation Army came caroling; whether it was the candlelight, the famous crown roast of lamb, or the red runner respectfully laid down, the Duke and



SPOONING
THE SETTINGS: MISMATCHED BUT HARMONIOUS. THE HOSTESS (BELOW) WORE VALENTINO.



Duchess of Windsor so enjoyed the Lauders' black-tie dinners that they annually returned to celebrate their wedding anniversary.

Instead of her grandmother's small groups of 25 or so, Aerin invited 60 friends, six tables of ten in the baronial upstairs dining room. "Not all the plates matched," Aerin admitted, "but I think it matched, if you see what I mean. It was harmonious; you were 'at home.' It feels very rented to me when everything matches perfectly."

Working with Sean Driscoll of Glorious Food, Aerin made the menu "very Estée," beginning with smoked salmon and caviar, fillet of beef with homemade potato chips, peas and carrots, and chocolate cake with small servings of ice cream. The florist Raul Avila filled the house with white orchids and roses.

The nine o'clock dinner followed a party for 1,000 at Saks Fifth Avenue, where the Tom Ford Estée Lauder Amber Nude fragrance collection had been launched. As most of the younger guests—from Lauren du Pont to the Proenza Schouler boys—had never before been in the house (now the preserve of Aerin's father, Ronald Lauder), everyone was allowed time for a grand snoop. Like someone from a John Singer Sargent painting, Aerin wore a long, white Valentino dress. No, Valentino, a neighbor, was not in attendance; it was the height of the social season in Manhattan, and he was giving his own party points elsewhere that night. □

inspiration all in the family

1 If elegance is restraint, a monochromatic centerpiece of snow-white roses is the height of chic. Miho Kosuda arrangement, \$350; (212) 922-9122. **2** Set a buffet with your own dinnerware, even for a catered evening. This sweetly romantic tin plate (\$7) was inspired by an eighteenth-century French dessert service in the Frick museum collection; www.frick.org. **3** It's great if you can wear inherited diamonds! And if your family tree isn't quite that sparkling? Wear a new piece that looks estate like these Munnu/The Gem Palace rose-cut diamonds; (212) 861-0606. **4** Don't always follow tradition precisely to

a tee; pour the post-meal tea with a contemporary classic Reichenbach porcelain-and-platinum tea set by modernist designer Paola Navone, \$300; www.anthropologie.com. **5** Candlelight is flattering, making guests feel lit from within. It's even more romantic when the candlesticks are Victorian antiques; www.guinevere.co.uk. **6** Tory Burch evening bags (\$378 to \$598) are a fresh take on the traditional beaded clutch—very "heritage with a twist"; Tory Burch, NYC. **7** Cartier's platinum-ruby-and-diamond orchids will sparkle in an Estée-inspired lighting scheme; (800) CARTIER. □

