



LITERARY LIONS
A FASHIONABLE
CONSTELLATION
GATHERED IN THE
TRUSTEES ROOM.

noise in the library

William Norwich attends a star-studded reading at the New York Public Library to unlock the secret of an un-boring book party.

Some people entertain by the book—there is an endless supply each season from experts who will tell you how to do it—but entertaining with books is a different matter.

Book parties, per se, have gotten a bad rap lately. For the young, these parties are a bore. No music, no dancing, limited opportunities to flirt, not enough food to make a full meal (and save the expense of having to buy and cook your supper), and what, really, are you supposed to wear?

So when *Vogue* contributing editor **Catie Marron** sought ideas for how to do something special for the New York Public Library, a few friends got to thinking. Marron, who is one of the heads of the Emergency Campaign for the Library, a voluntary position, specifically wanted to draw attention to this fall's ambitious, and essential, Make Noise for the Library program.

Because of cutbacks and other governmental restrictions, New York City's public libraries are in trouble. As much financial aid as possible for the research and branch libraries needs to be rallied, and so people—all kinds of people from all walks of life—are

being asked to do something to "make noise for the library," from writing big checks to simply going on-line to www.nypl.org to donate a book off the library's wish list, which links to Amazon, or make a donation of \$17, the cost of one new book.

And this is what happened next: An evening of readings in the library's impressive Trustees Room by **Oscar de la Renta**, **Zac Posen**, **Sophie Dahl**, and **Isaac Mizrahi** was planned. "I never thought I would ever be reading to an audience at the New York Public Library," de la Renta said, admittedly moved by the experience. Each reader chose excerpts from something they loved. Having first been given the book by his wife, Annette, Oscar read from **Henry Beston's** *The Outermost House: A Year of Life on the Great Beach of Cape Cod*. Posen read **Samuel Taylor Coleridge's** "Kubla Khan." Dahl read a nonfiction story she herself wrote, called "The First Boy I

the menu

Savories

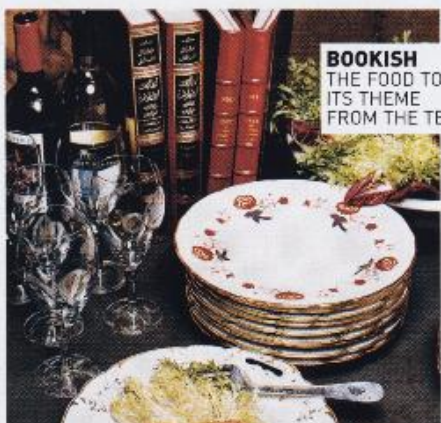
Noël Coward
salmon mousse
"Kubla Khan"
honeydew and
prosciutto

Salad

Sophie Dahl's
fennel, tomato, and
black olives

Sweets

Strawberries with
macadamia puree



BOOKISH
THE FOOD TOOK
ITS THEME
FROM THE TEXTS.

Loved," from an anthology titled *Truth or Dare* that will be published by Picador this fall in London. Mizrahi read selections from Noël Coward's diaries, including an entry about preparing bull shots and salmon mousse for the late queen mother when she visited the playwright's house in Jamaica many moons ago.

A short cocktail hour (53 minutes, to be exact), soft music. . . Although Marron's party, like all good fund-raisers should be, was organized on a budget, that did not mean the evening had to forgo its theme, the love of books and reading.

Private chef **Hank Tomashevski's** menu was inspired by each excerpt: From the reading about Cape Cod came crab cakes. In "Kubla Khan" there is a rapturous honeydew passage; we had honeydew and prosciutto hors d'oeuvre. From the Coward, the obvious choice was the salmon mousse and also a berry pudding mentioned in the diaries. Sophie Dahl's piece was a bit of stretch, as no food was mentioned in it, but it was set in London in the 1990s, and what was that? Salads with sophisticated greens. So there was a salad with sophisticated greens, drawing the line at cilantro. Cilantro is so last season.

Before any of this could happen, **Raul Avila**—who, having labored for fourteen years as the right hand for events designer **Robert Isabell**, has recently opened his own flower and party-design business in Manhattan—studied the library's Trustees Room for direction. He was inspired by the tapestries on the walls, which depict an enlightened, and rather perky, arcadia.

"So I thought to decorate the mantel of the fireplace with hydrangeas and English ivy," Avila said. "Ivy, to me, is a symbol of knowledge." He filled the empty corners of the room with borrowed potted palms.

"I tell people who cannot afford to hire someone when they entertain at home that maybe you do not know exactly how to do what we professionals do," said Avila, "but certainly you know what you like. And hopefully in your house there is at least one thing you like. A painting, perhaps, or a sofa, or a vase, or a tablecloth, or"—he laughed—"even a rock. Let that one thing inspire you, and you will know instinctively how to bring your house to life." □

CAPE COD CRAB CAKES
INSPIRED BY
DE LA RENTA'S READING.



THE
DESIGNER
ZAC POSEN
WITH JOHN
EDWARDS'S
DAUGHTER
CATE.

Zac Posen read
"Kubla Khan." Sophie
Dahl read her own
nonfiction story called
"The First Boy I Loved"



DAHL BUSSES
DE LA RENTA.



RAUL AVILA
DID THE
LUSH FLOWER
ARRANGEMENTS.



THE
BUFFET
WAS SET
AGAINST
A 17TH-
CENTURY
FLEMISH
TAPESTRY.



ANNETTE DE LA RENTA
(LEFT) WITH LIBRARY
PRESIDENT PAUL LELERC
AND CATE MARRON.



inspiration page-turners

1) Raul Avila's cascading ivy installation for the Trustees Room may be too dramatic a statement outside a grand setting like the New York Public Library, but a warm centerpiece of hydrangea and viburnum berries will look right at home. Raul Avila Inc., NYC; (212) 242-7673. 2) The perfect literary-themed party favor? A gold-plated bookmark, looped through a rich ruby ribbon, about \$10. www.metmuseum.org/store. 3) What better look for a book party than a glamorized "librarian" blouse with a chic bow neckline? Oscar de la Renta peach chiffon top, about \$1,400. By special order at Saks Fifth Avenue, NYC. 4) The words leap off the page with an antique ivory-and-sandalwood magnifying glass, about \$565. Sentimento, NYC; (212) 750-3111. 5) Sweeten the plot with the almond-meringue delight of Parisian macaroons from Payard, about \$15. www.payard.com.

FRANÇOIS DISCHINGER; still lifes: ALEX CAO