It's party time

Thoughts on how to transform the home for the holidays

BY CAROLYN SACKARIASON

Home entertaining is a generous and warm way of letting your friends and family know they are special.

That's the underlying philosophy of Aspen party planner Nancy Snell, who is gearing up for the holiday season with fresh ideas and relying on some basic concepts to create the ultimate soirée.

Lavish and over-the-top events are a common theme in the Aspen party scene, with hosts spending as much as $1 million to entertain for an evening.

No matter what the cost is, the key to hosting a party is having just the right food, libations, entertainment and home decorations. And the experience begins with the invitation — which does not mean one sent via the World Wide Web, where advertisements are slapped onto an Evite, Snell offers.

The party starts from the moment guests put their feet on the ground, so a well-lit and shoveled entrance is of the utmost importance. A unique experience and setting, such as a bonfire next to the valet stand — or musicians playing holiday music against a backdrop of white lights draped on branches and trees — are common scene setters for the evening.

More unique in setting the holiday scene are sleigh rides taking guests to a warm place in the home where hot drinks are served, a light dusting of machine-generated snow and female greeters dressed in sexy Santa outfits, Snell suggests.

Coming up with fresh ideas is always the challenge for Snell, who says the same 800 or so people are constants on the local party circuit.

On the libations front, a specialty drink of the evening is a must, as is offering non-alcoholic concoctions, including something special for children, if they are invited. A Christmas punch flowing over dry ice, or a

continued on page 73

IT'S PARTY TIME, Continued from page 18

Russian ice bar with vodka and caviar have been big hits at some of Snell's parties, she says.

Food can be boring unless it's served in a creative and social way. If it's not a formal, sit-down dinner, Snell suggests small plates for guests where two to three bites are offered at a time. "It keeps people moving around, and talking and interacting," she says. Everything should be presented on decorated trays, and to dress it up even more, try putting edibles on lit Lucite cubes that change color. Even if it's a sit-down dinner, dessert should always be served on a buffet table covered in acres of sheer cloth with white and blue tones.

Lighting is important on the ceilings and in corners with Christmas red and green, and snowflakes projected on the walls. Snell says subtle décor elements can make such a difference. You can create a winter wonderland by using twinkle lights everywhere, lots of candles and large lighted cones that change colors, Snell says. Inside fountains surrounded with white flowers are a nice touch and so is covering the furniture in white.

And don't skimp on the entertainment — Snell says one of the more over-the-top activities offered by one of her clients was transforming a dining room into a synthetic ice rink. Music should always play a significant role at the party. Live bands, dueling piano players, deejays or dancers will keep guests entertained all night long.

A MAIN STREET ARCHITECT, Continued from page 14

The new office sits in the middle of downtown Carbondale, at 311 Main St., in a building the Poss team reconfigured to create five individual office suites.

"The smaller module of the office suites comfortably houses multiple project team groupings and support functions in a fashion very analogous to the Aspen facility," says Poss architect Dave Ritchie, who oversaw the office construction. "This layout works well for integrated design activities and further reinforces the philosophical harmony of Poss Architecture + Planning."

Furthering this idea of integration is the fact that employees in Poss' two offices are linked seamlessly via a common database, an expanded phone system and state-of-the-art video conferencing. This, says Poss, can only benefit clients in the firm's expanding market.

SIGNATURE DECOR, Continued from page 29

Alongside his girlfriend Lea Tyler, a ceramic potter who works in a studio overlooking the retail space, Odoski launched Via Viva in December 2007. "I've just always been passionate about environmental and social responsibility," Odoski says. "Sustainable furniture was the most logical direction."

Odoski designs the pieces — a very clean and modern style, but warm because of the rich wood tones — and he commissions craftsmen in Indonesia to use recycled hardwoods to bring the designs to life. About 300 people are employed in the manufacturing plant, which distributes furniture to Europe as well.

Odoski imports shipping containers of the handcrafted furnishings from Indonesia, then sends the containers back filled with white oak — a sustainably-farmed hardwood from Germany — which his overseas staff use in manufacturing along with recycled materials.

His 2,200-square-foot showroom is filled with organic sofas and chairs, along with handcrafted home accessories made by the hands of native Indonesians and local artists. Volcanic rock vases, sandstone carvings and candle lanterns are just some of the offerings. He's also got stone bathtubs and sinks, hand carved in basalt and granite from north central Java.

"This whole business is from traveling around the world," Odoski says. "Indonesian people are quite crafty in their designs and the whole idea is to get them involved in every step of the way."