



# Relax and Enjoy the Holidays

With Chef Bobby Moore's Tips for Hosting a Party, You and Your Guests Will Eat Well and Make Fun Memories Together



(Clockwise from top left) Barking Frog; Chef Bobby Moore; Moore preparing a five-course meal at the James Beard House in New York City.

**Everyone loves a great party, and the holidays are the perfect time to gather good friends and family to celebrate the season. But pulling the details together can be a bit overwhelming. There's a lot to do, from cleaning and decorating the house to shopping and prepping the food. And what about setting up the bar and selecting the best wines to complement the menu?**

Pacific Northwest regional chef Bobby Moore knows all these things can be a challenge to a busy host and hostess. He presides over the kitchen at Barking Frog, a delightful fireside bistro at MTM Luxury Lodging's Willows Lodge, an award-winning wine and culinary destination resort in Woodinville, Washington, that was recently named by *Travel + Leisure* as the 80th best hotel in the world and the 12th best throughout the United States and Canada. And Chef Moore has amassed prestigious honors in his own right. In 2008, he was invited to bring his culinary team to the historic James Beard House in New York City, where they prepared an elaborate five-course meal centered on Northwest flavors.

But when it comes to entertaining at home, he and his wife, Michelle, keep it simple and fun. Which led Bobby to create a special cooking series at Willows Lodge he calls Holiday Boot Camp to share recipes and entertaining ideas with hotel guests and Barking Frog patrons.

Bobby knows there are lots of busy parents and professionals who, like he and his wife, want to host large gatherings but don't have time to fuss. "I always do my best work last minute," he laughs, "but really, when you're throwing a party, it's all about the day before."

The biggest challenges are not just the cooking, he notes. "To take the stress out," Bobby says, "do as many things as can be done in advance, like cleaning and filling the house with fresh flowers and setting the table. Make as much food ahead as possible; it will often be more flavorful the next day. Everything cannot happen the day of the party, or you won't have any energy left to visit with your guests."

Bobby and Michelle like to offer a single, signature cocktail with a special ingredient that might relate to the party's theme when guests walk in the door. They put on lively music and have a selection of room-temperature appetizers ready that can be consumed in a single bite—nothing that requires utensils or is messy, says Michelle. Fruit, unusual cheeses, and specialty crackers or Bobby's signature Grand Marnier prawns (*see page 1 for the recipe*) are good choices.

A delicious main course that easily feeds many people is a fresh ham with a citrus glaze, special chutney, and an unusual gratin on the side. "We take something traditional and put a creative spin on it," Bobby says. "I layer flavors and introduce people to something different by adding sun-dried tomatoes and Swiss chard to my potato gratin."

For dessert, a seasonal spin on a classic like crème brûlée is always a hit. Trena Costello, pastry chef at Barking Frog, suggests adapting a creamy chocolate brûlée by adding fresh orange zest and cinnamon for an aroma and flavor perfect for the holidays.

Bobby and Michelle generally offer their guests two choices of wine. In the winter, they favor a robust red and often a Prosecco or Champagne at holiday time. If the gathering is intimate, the chef sometimes raids his cellar and allows every couple to pick a bottle of their choosing. "Either way," says Michelle, "we keep it to one bottle per couple and add a few extras for good measure. If wine is unopened, it can always be saved for the next party."

With two young boys aged 5 and 7, children are generally a part of the Moores' guest list, so they try to give the kids some fun food choices, too. "We put out things they can assemble themselves, like build-your-own taco, a pasta bar with different sauces and meatballs, or even make-your-own pizza," says Michelle. "Whenever possible, we hire a sitter who can solely focus on the kids, get games started, and help with messy art projects. And we always have a table set up with coloring supplies." Parents get a break and children have a wonderful time, the couple agrees.

"Remember that everyone is busy and we don't see our friends and relatives nearly as much as we'd like to. So stay calm and enjoy yourself," say the Moores. "This is a happy time to catch up and reminisce. So, it's OK if the house isn't spotless and the fondue is sticking to the bottom of the pot. Your guests will remember your hospitality and the great memories you've created most of all." *Written by Robyn Roehm Cannon. Photography provided by Willows Lodge. [YHL](#)*

*For more information on Chef Moore's Holiday Boot Camp Series, contact Willows Lodge at 877-424-3930 or [www.willowslodge.com](http://www.willowslodge.com).*



### Sugar & Spice

- 1 lemon wedge
- 1 orange wedge
- 3 ounces Skyy Spiced
- 1 ounce Cointreau
- splash cranberry juice

Muddle the lemon and orange wedges in a cocktail shaker. Fill the shaker two-thirds full of ice and add the remaining ingredients. Shake thoroughly. Strain into a sugared-rim glass. Garnish with an orange peel curl and whole cloves.