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How to Host a Traditional 'Downton Abbey' Party

The new movie offers a chance to revel in foods, traditions, and other elements inspired by the award-winning drama.

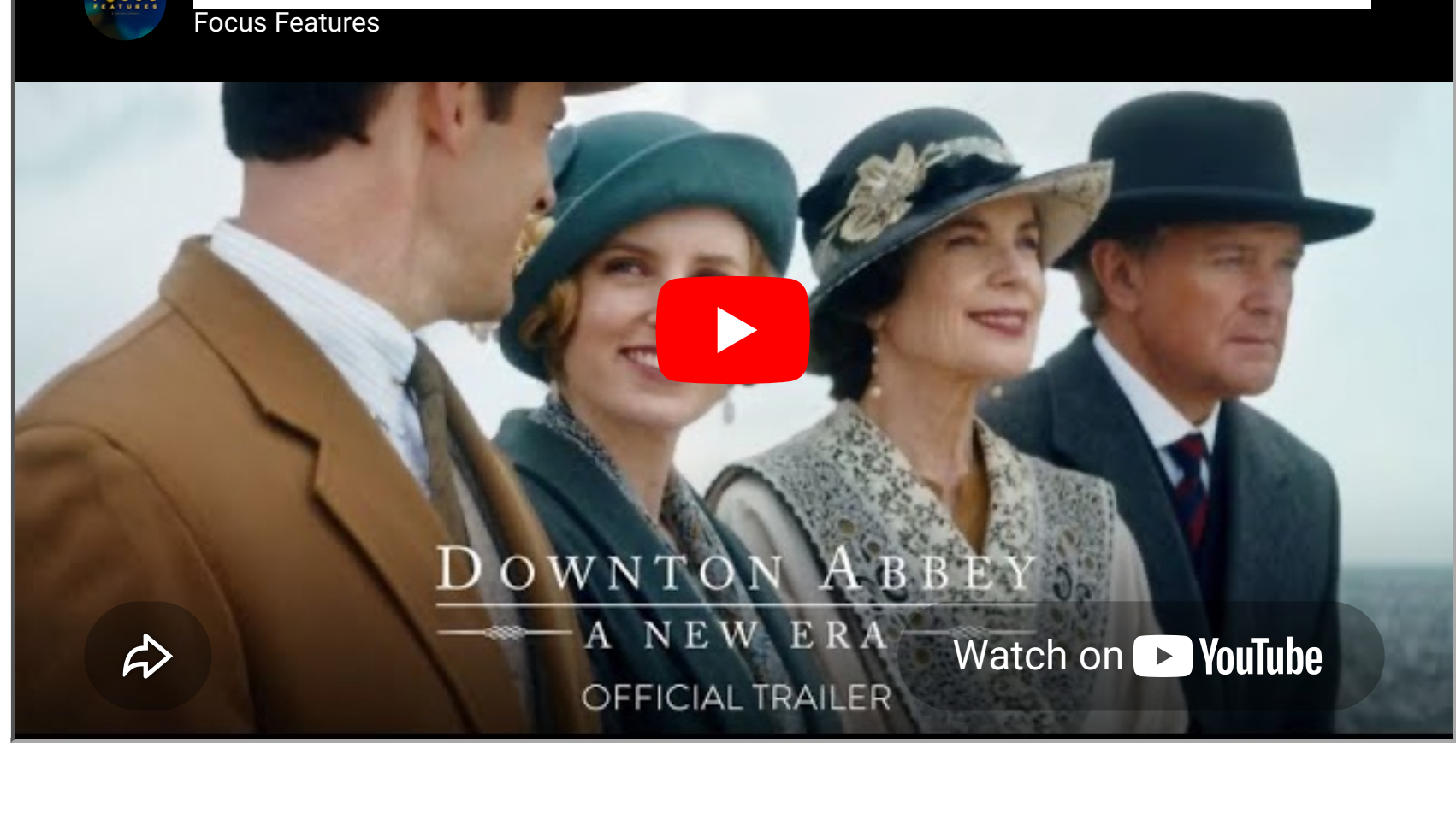
ERIN BRERETON APR 11, 2022

Learn how to make entertaining easy in our series “A Time to Gather.” From wine tasting parties to grilling tips and tutorials on creating holiday tablescapes, we’ll take all the stress out of your next backyard BBQ or holiday feast.

If you’re planning to celebrate the [upcoming release](#) of *Downton Abbey: A New Era* with a Downton-themed bash, get ready to ring the servants’ bell board to fire up the stove and start planning — because the third movie based on the popular PBS series is scheduled to hit theaters in May.

Although formal dinner parties are a frequent social event in the show, elements from Downton’s day can easily be included in other types of get-togethers, ranging from swanky cocktail soirees to casual afternoon gatherings.

Even if you lack hundreds of rooms, antique furniture, or any other Edwardian-era accoutrements, by incorporating traditional dishes, décor, and other touches from the time period, you can throw a Downton Abbey shindig that will feel downright stately.



Old-Fashioned ambiance

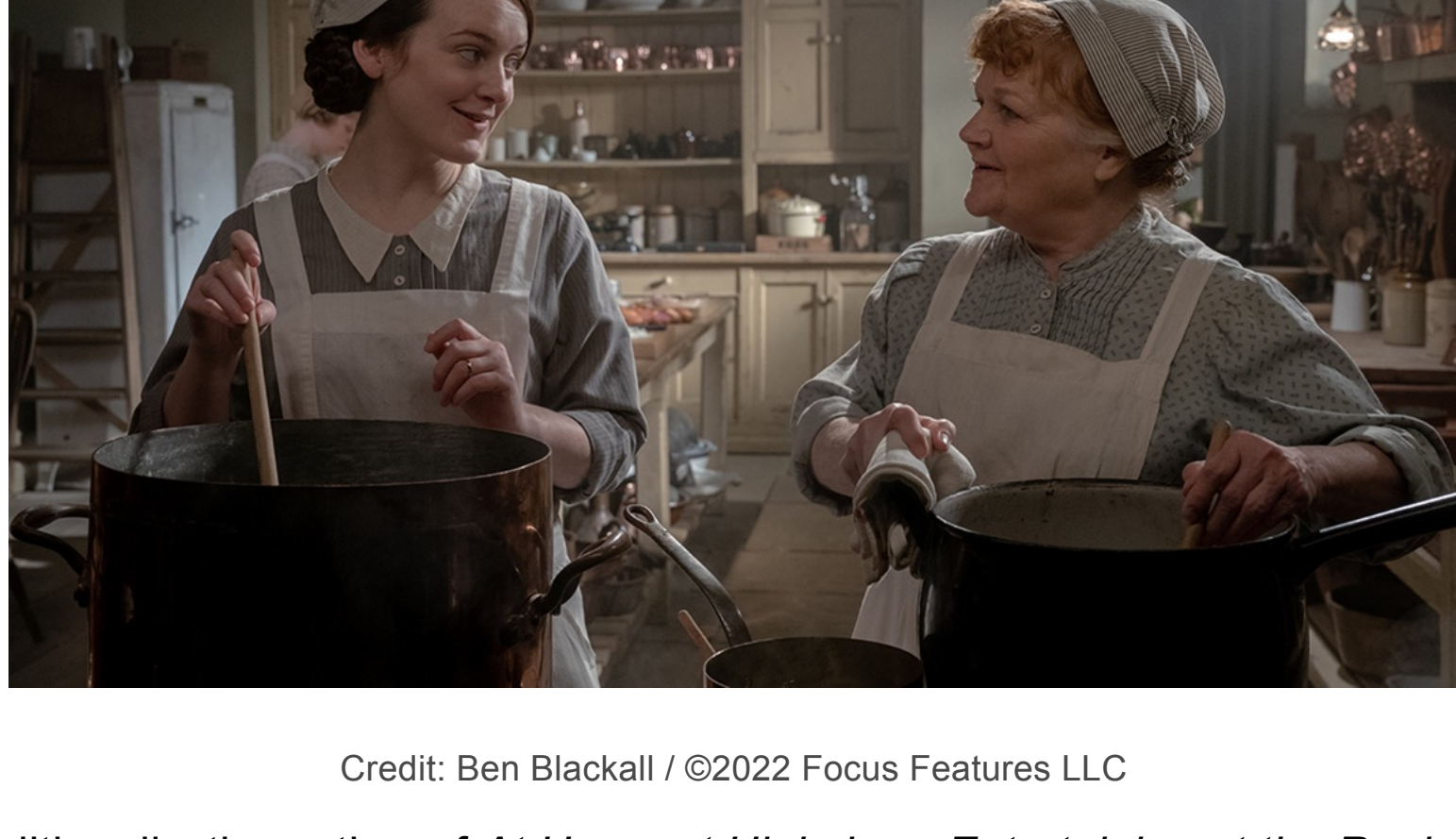
To imbue a space with a cozy, intimate feel, consider setting out [candles](#), which a number of residents may have used to supplement gas lighting — something London’s Science Museum [notes](#) provided “relatively gentle illumination” — throughout the 1930s, when electricity still wasn’t available in a third of homes in the United Kingdom.

[Fresh flowers](#) can add color to a room — and a symbolic meaning, if the host selects bouquets based on the connotations Victorian-age Brits attributed to certain varieties. Flowers were sometimes used in the 1800s to [subtly convey romantic feelings](#), according to the Smithsonian Museum; white violets, for instance, were said to represent innocence, whereas bluebells symbolized kindness.

To tie the practice into present-day party themes, a host could incorporate myrtle, for instance, which once signified good luck and love in marriage, into bridal shower décor; or put out [purple violets](#), which indicate someone’s thoughts are filled with love for the recipient, at a surprise birthday party.

Formal Downton Abbey dining

Setting the table for an Edwardian-esque multi-course meal can involve such intricate details that the butler at Highclere Castle — the historical Hampshire, England estate where the *Downton Abbey* series and subsequent movies were filmed — is sometimes asked to give visiting tour groups a brief tutorial of the process, according to Lady Carnarvon, who lives at the estate with her husband, the Earl of Carnarvon.



Credit: Ben Blackall / ©2022 Focus Features LLC

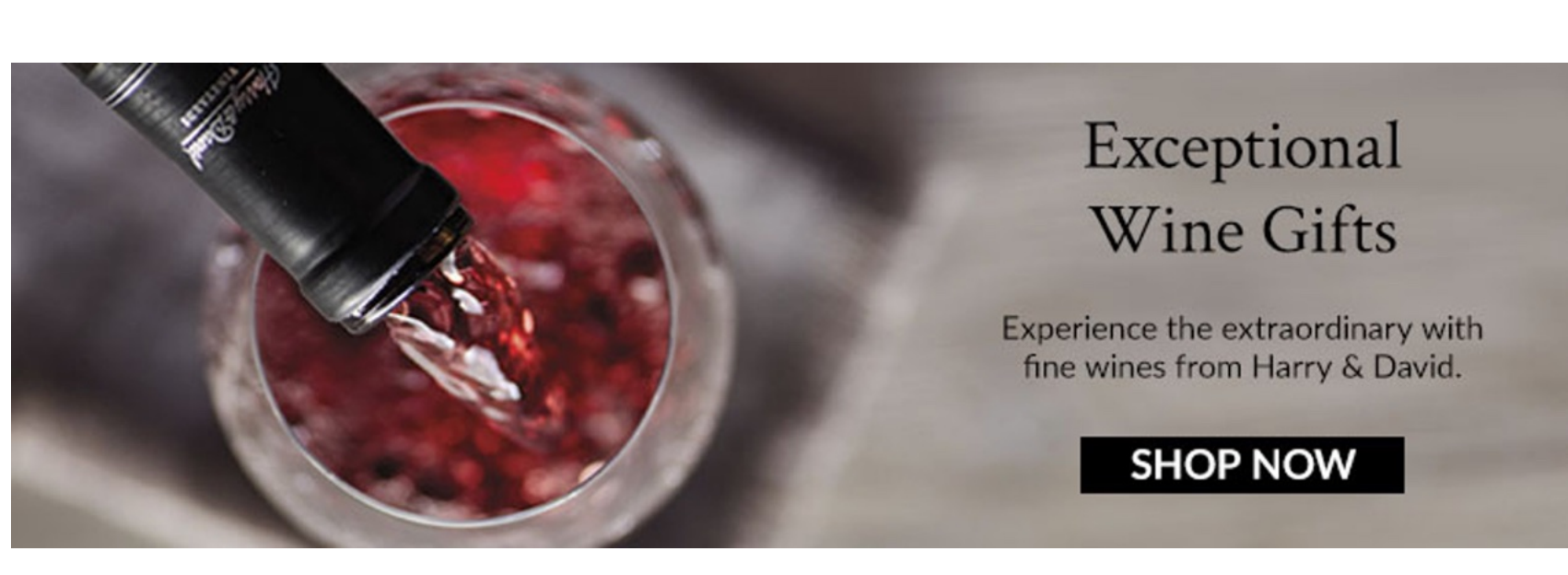
Traditionally, the author of *At Home at Highclere: Entertaining at the Real Downton Abbey* says the [white wine glass](#) would be placed to the right of the [red wine glass](#), with a water glass and possibly a port or Madeira dessert wine glass behind those items; silverware groupings should allow guests to work from the outside in during the various courses, which often began with [soup](#) and later included [chicken](#), [lamb](#) or [beef](#).

“Food was always a big thing,” Lady Carnarvon says. “Some of the menus were quite extensive.”

Long-Established libations

If a full dinner feels like an overwhelming amount of work, a [cocktail](#) reception can often be easier to plan and execute.

The elaborate cocktails that were being served in America in the Victorian era made their way overseas when mixology pioneers such as famed U.S. bartender Jerry Thomas [visited the U.K.](#) in 1859.



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If you’re (understandably) not feeling adventurous enough to shake up Thomas’ signature Blue Blazer cocktail — which, according to his book, *How to Mix Drinks: Or, The Bon-vivant’s Companion*, involves passing whiskey that’s been lit on fire back and forth between two glasses to create a flaming arch — serving one of the tamer drinks he offered during his U.K. stay, such as a port wine julep or glass of punch, could add a vintage feel to your event. Punches, in particular, can be convenient party drinks because you can mix up a large batch before the event. This festive punch [recipe](#), which author Charles Dickens reportedly favored, features a mix of lemons, sugar, cognac and rum.

Teatime elegance

A tea-oriented *Downton Abbey* party can be another less time-intensive alternative to a seated dinner.

The afternoon tea tradition [reportedly](#) dates back to the seventh Duchess of Bedford, one of Queen Victoria’s ladies in waiting, who started the ritual around 1840 to combat hunger when dinner had shifted later to about 9 p.m, making the gap between lunch and the evening meal more pronounced.

The lighter savory and sweet fare served at high or afternoon tea will probably require less prep work and planning than making a full meal; you could possibly put out an array of [cookies](#) to nosh on, for example, or [scones](#) — which are Brits’ favorite part of the daily tea tradition, according to a 2015 [survey](#).



Credit: Ben Blackall / ©2022 Focus Features LLC

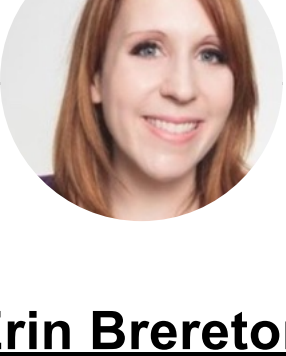
[To serve the tea](#) in the style used in the 18th and 19th century, try pouring the milk in first — [a necessary step](#) to keep the delicate porcelain cups used in the era from breaking due to the liquid’s heat.

Regardless of whether you decide to put out [finger foods](#) or a multi-course meal, determining as many details as possible beforehand is absolutely crucial, says to Lady Carnarvon — especially if you happen to be somewhat short on butlers and footmen and will be serving everything yourself.

“Cora — Lady Grantham — would have had meetings with the housekeepers way ahead and brought in Mrs. Patmore, the cook,” she says. “You definitely need time to work out what you’re going to serve, and how you’re going to do it. Planning and preparation are what all these houses have always run on.”

Downton Abbey 2: A New Era premieres in theaters on May 20, 2022.

AUTHOR



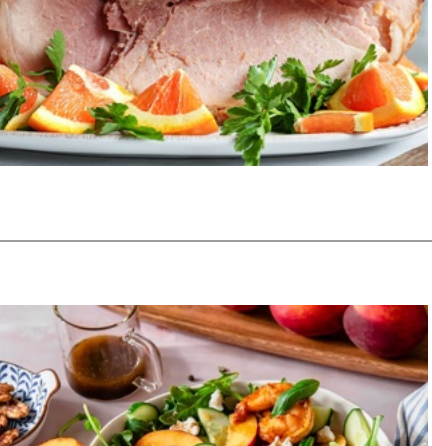
Erin Brereton

Erin Brereton is a Chicago-based freelance journalist who writes about dining and culinary trends, travel, and other topics.

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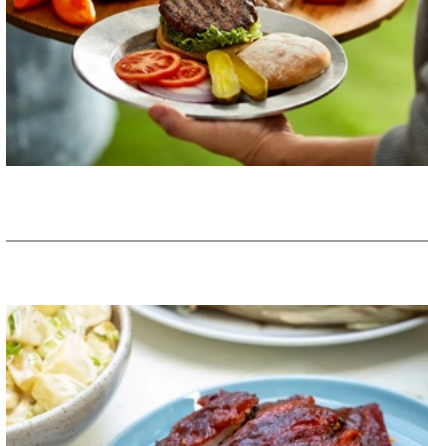
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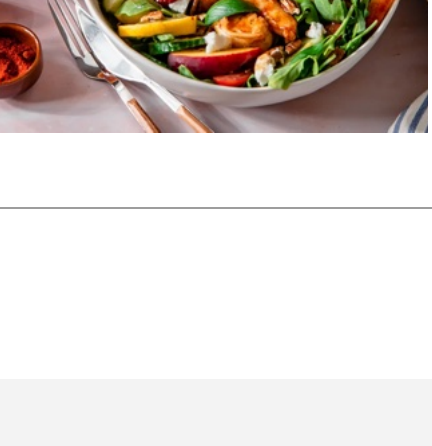
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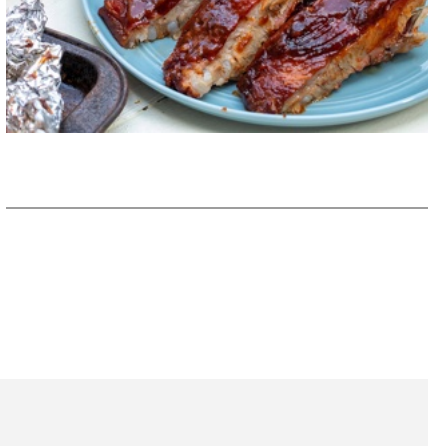
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FOOD + DRINK

FOOD FACTS

What to Eat Based on Your Zodiac Sign

Find out how the stars aligning can help determine your next meal.

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In "[Chew on This](#)" we serve up the flavorful history of food and how it has shaped the way we cook and eat today. Let our Zodiac sign food ideas satisfy your astrological hunger.

Horoscopes and food might seem unrelated, but they were actually once inextricably connected.

Centuries ago, studying the stars' movements allowed people to track and predict the seasons. This was critical to ensuring a successful harvest, according to Catherine Urban, a Cleveland-based astrologer, former *BonAppétit.com* horoscope columnist, and author of [Your Astrological Cookbook: The Perfect Recipe for Every Sign](#).

"Astrology was developed around agriculture," Urban says. "To understand how to grow food, you

had to watch the planets.”

Although farmers may not rely on the stars as much today, the sun’s location when you were born, which determines your Zodiac sign, can offer insight into your personality traits. And these, in turn, contribute to dictating the qualities you look for in the food you eat, says astrologer Monte Farber, who co-wrote *[Signs & Seasons: An Astrology Cookbook](#)* with his wife (and fellow astrologer), Amy Zerner.



“The best foods for each of us depends on our tastes, cravings, energy, temperament — and astrology can reveal those qualities,” Farber says. “By understanding our personal ‘vibes,’ we can focus on balance, nutrition, and enjoyment.”

Here is a look at some foods the 12 signs of the Zodiac may favor.

Aries (March 21–April 19)

No surprise here: This fire sign likes spicy and bold tastes, Farber says. As a result, foods such as [lamb](#), black olives, and [grapefruit](#), along with spices like ginger and cayenne, can appeal to Aries.

Celestially satisfying dishes: Bruschetta topped with a [black olive spread](#) can offer “an exciting, brash flavor” for Aries, who appreciate small bites, Farber says. The always-on-the-go sign may also benefit from sipping hydrating beverages, such as [citrus-infused](#)

[water](#).

Taurus (April 20–May 20)

Taureans, Farber says, tend to have a penchant for sumptuous, decadent dishes.

“[Avocados](#) and mild cheeses are a great way for them to get some of the rich, creamy taste they crave without overindulging in heavy foods,” he says.

Celestially satisfying dishes: Starting with [spinach avocado dip](#) or a [cream cheese torta appetizer](#) will extend a mealtime for Taureans, who like to eat slowly, savoring every morsel, Farber says.

A main course made with [sablefish](#), also referred to as black cod, can correspond to the sign’s taste tendencies. “Black cod is luscious, luxurious, distinctive, and smooth,” Farber says.

Gemini (May 21–June 20)

Geminis, Urban says, are often willing to try something new or put a spin on a dish. “They’re a bit more experimental,” she says.

Celestially satisfying dishes: A salad made with unique ingredients — one that combines [greens with elements like edible flowers](#), for example, which can add crispy, sweet, and other unique flavors — could be a good main dish for the sign. Geminis, Zerner says, are often interested in items like lettuce, [citrus](#), and snap peas.

“They love a variety of flavor and a mix of color,” she says. “As they are an air sign, [they] don’t like big, heavy meals.”



Cancer (June 21–July 22)

This astrological sign's palate centers on mild, soothing foods, including coconut, figs, [crab](#), pine nuts, and eggs, according to Farber.

"Traditionally, there is a link between areas of the body and the sun signs in astrology," he says.

"Cancer sun signs may be prone to sensitive stomachs and might want to stay away from spicy, highly seasoned food."

Celestially satisfying dishes: A quiche; warm [English muffin](#) with [fig preserves](#); [orange coconut smoothie](#); or a similar health-oriented breakfast beverage might be an agreeable morning meal for a Cancer.

Leo (July 23–August 22)

Corn, clams, spinach, and mozzarella are some of the foods to which this fire sign is drawn, Farber says. This is due in part to some — such as tomatoes — being in season during the sunny summer months when Leos are born.

Celestially satisfying dishes: With an affinity for peaches, Leos might enjoy this [peach caprese salad recipe](#), which features fresh mozzarella and two types of tomatoes. A [peach pie](#) would also be well received, according to Farber. Possible variations on the classic summer dessert include a pie made with [berries](#), [peach tart](#), crowd-pleasing [slab pie](#), and [peach galette](#).

Virgo (August 23–September 22)

This detail-oriented sign — often represented as a maiden carrying stalks of wheat — is prone to worrying and, thus, likes to eat things that are calming, such as [chicken](#). This informal and familiar food also ties into Virgo's association with small animals, Farber says.



Celestially satisfying dishes: While fruit-filled [kringle wreath pastry](#) and [raspberry bread pudding](#) desserts relate to the sign's love of blueberries and raspberries, Farber and Zerner suggest chicken-and-fennel kebabs for a Virgo meal. [Chicken and steak marinated in a tangy homemade sauce](#), and then skewered with bell peppers and mushrooms and grilled is an alternative that's both savory and sweet.

Libra (September 23–October 22)

Born between September and October, during the harvest season, Librans have an appetite for traditional fall flavors, such as apple and cinnamon, as well as a fair amount of balance.

“A Libran looks for a harmonious blend in all things,” Ferber says. “They want everything to be fair and equal, which means that they are very aware of portion size and presentation.”

Celestially satisfying dishes: Farber calls [apple crisp](#) — which can include another Libra-friendly food, oats — “a delicious dessert for Libra season.” The sign also likes items that offset sweet with sour, says Urban, a Libra who’s partial to sour beer. Additional cocktail options include a [Moscow Mule made with apple cider, ginger beer, and lemon juice](#), or a punch involving cinnamon, honey, orange, and pomegranate (another Libra favorite, according to Farber).

“Traditionally, there is a link between areas of the body and the sun signs in astrology.”

- Monte Farber, co-author of *Signs & Seasons: An Astrology Cookbook*

Scorpio (October 23–November 21)

As a water sign ruled by Mars, Scorpions have a soft spot for foods that are spicy — or even burnt, according to Urban. “When a food is charred to perfection on a grill, it’s something a Scorpio can really appreciate,” she says.

Celestially satisfying dishes: The sign’s intense nature can also include a proclivity for rich, flavorful dishes, such as [smoked andouille sausage](#), or possibly a [chocolate cream pie](#). The latter, Farber suggests, would satisfy a Scorpio’s hunger for a lush chocolate pudding dessert. “Their list of favorite foods will usually include some sensuous foods

known to [arouse passions](#), such as oysters and chocolate,” he says. “Scorpio would like a Cajun meal, served with music to evoke a jazzy, sexy time in New Orleans.”

Sagittarius (November 22–December 21)

Jupiter-ruled signs like Sagittarius adore [dessert](#), according to Urban. “The other thing they just love are fats,” she says. “[Cheese](#), anything fried — those are things Sags also enjoy.”

Celestially satisfying dishes: Robust [Thanksgiving-themed foods](#), ranging from [squash](#) to [turkey](#), are usually on this travel aficionado’s preferred list, according to Zerner, in addition to international cuisine. [Mexican street corn](#), for instance, containing roasted jalapeño peppers, Cotija cheese, and lime, might resonate with Sagittarians.



Capricorn (December 22–January 19)

Cooler weather can increase the desire for protein and foods that provide energy, according to Farber. Yet Capricorns, who have a passion for filling fare, such as [beef](#), cauliflower, and bread, are generally game for lowkey, straightforward dinners after the holiday season indulgences end.

Celestially satisfying dishes: Since Capricorns, Urban says, are apt to be very busy, they prefer meal prep to be minimal. “They’re good at finding shortcuts and hacks,” she says. Capricorns might appreciate a heat-and-serve [beef pot pie](#), [one-pot pasta](#) recipe, or another item that [can be prepared quickly using common pantry staples](#).

Aquarius (January 20–February 18)

As an air sign, Aquarians prefer no-frills dining selections that require minimal cleanup but still provide a solid, quality meal, Urban says. “They don’t care about extra sauce, and all the dressing and dip,” she says.

Celestially satisfying dishes: Seasoned chicken can be a simple yet flavorful entrée choice for the sign, according to Urban. Aquarians might, for instance, enjoy a dinner involving [Teriyaki-marinated boneless chicken breasts](#) or [chicken chili that’s made in a slow cooker](#).

Pisces (February 19–March 20)

Pisceans gravitate toward delicate, gentle foods, such as a low-fat soup. A number, though, also want their meal to include a notable sugar fix, according to Farber.

“Pisces needs sweet treats,” he says. “So end with [poached pears in maple syrup](#) — an easy, wholesome, winter dessert.”



Celestially satisfying dishes: A number of other ingredients can be used to poach pears, including [saffron](#), [bourbon whiskey](#), and [red wine](#). A custard would also work as an after-dinner option, Urban says, because Pisceans are particularly fond of creamy, fluffy desserts.

“Sagittarius and Pisces really like the whipped cream, the cinnamon, the sweetness — all that stuff,” she says.

CHEW ON THIS

ZODIAC SIGN



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Erin Brereton is a Chicago-based freelance journalist who writes about dining and culinary trends, travel, and

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Chairwoman of the Board: Q&A With That Charcuterie Chick

Olivia Carney dishes about her new book, entertaining, and building the ultimate board.

Home » Olivia Carney

Since December 2019, Olivia Carney — also known as That Charcuterie Chick — has been sharing mouthwatering displays of [cured meats](#), [rich cheeses](#), and other flavorful foods on [Instagram](#). In fall 2022, the north New Jersey-based social media influencer's first book, [The Art of the Board](#), hit shelves, offering dozens of board ideas ranging from a dinner-themed Taco Tuesday display to one fashioned from Thanksgiving leftovers.

We spoke with Carney about her passion for creating captivating meat-and-cheese presentations, some of her favorite items to include on boards, and other elements that can help turn any gathering into a next-level event.

What led you to specialize in creative charcuterie boards?

It stems from my childhood and special times I spent with my family growing up. It was always a staple of Friday nights in our home — before we'd either head out to dinner or do stuff with our friends, we would throw some crackers and cheese on a board and just laugh and enjoy ourselves.

As I've gotten older, I started seeing some incredibly artistic boards featured online, like heavily thematic [holiday boards](#) and abundant, self-serve grazing tables, and I was so inspired to share some of my own — and experiences my family and I have shared over the years. That's how That Charcuterie Chick was born.

What did writing *The Art of the Board* involve?

It was about a year-and-a-half process. I cared so deeply about making sure this book not only provided innovative and artistically stimulating recipes but also ones that felt approachable to people who don't have all the time in the world.

It's 75 seasonally inspired snack boards, and it also has recipes and cocktails; it's really everything you need for stress-free entertaining year-round.

What specific types of boards are featured in it?

I have an amazing board called the Harry & David Gift Basket Board that is based off their [Grand Signature Gift Basket](#). It's always so wonderful to receive these beautiful gift baskets, full of [crackers](#) and [cheeses](#) and [charcuterie](#). I tell you how to build a perfect board from just what is in the basket, step by step — how to take the different jams and [relishes](#), the cheese, and create this beautiful piece of food art.

What is your favorite holiday, and what board would you serve for it?

I love [Halloween](#), and one of my absolute favorite boards in the book is Halloween inspired. For that board, I hand-carved a skull into a round of brie cheese. Then, I took tiny eyeball candies and put



Olivia Carney, practicing the art of peek-a-book.

them in the olives. I also candied some blueberries and put them in a small witches cauldron to make it look bubbly. The holidays create the perfect opportunity to get creative and try something new with boards.



Boo-yah! How's that for a Halloween charcuterie board?

Are there any unique international elements you like to include on boards?

One type of charcuterie I use fairly often is soppressata, a very fatty, dry cured pork salami of Italian origin. It's super flavorful and very delicious, almost decadent.

One that is underappreciated, at least here in the States, is *jamón Ibérico*. I tried it when I was visiting Barcelona with my sister a few years back, and it was incredible. It comes from farm-raised pigs in Spain, and it's unique to that region.

For something that's palatable to a large audience, I love Parmigiano Reggiano. It's aged for such a long time that it starts to form these protein crystals that add an extra special crunch.

“Consumers are more interested in

authenticity and originality than the idolized perfectionism of the past.”

- Olivia Carney, That Charcuterie Chick

In addition to putting out a sensational charcuterie board, how can people successfully entertain guests at a dinner party or during the holidays?

If you're hosting people and you're creating this beautiful spread, bring in other elements to create an environment that feels really exciting and immersive. Think about other things that might add a special touch, outside of what you're serving as food.

For example, people will appreciate a specialty cocktail crafted specifically for that holiday or your theme. In my book, I have a smoked rosemary and Riviera pear bourbon spritzer, using [Harry & David Royal Riviera pears](#), which is really fun. It's really simple; you just make a pear simple syrup and then add some bourbon and ginger ale.

Cured meats have been around [since the 15th century](#). Will we ever get bored of displaying them on boards?

We can if we don't introduce ourselves to new flavors or change things up a bit. But if you incorporate interesting foods — [such as] Roquefort, a French blue cheese that's incredibly decadent and pungent, in the best way — they will continue to be really special and an awesome way of serving food. It's about thinking, "How can I introduce myself to new textures, flavors, international foods?" That creates this really cool experience for your guests.

What advice would you give people who hope to build a brand like That Charcuterie Chick?

The strategy behind creating a beautiful

aesthetic varies across social media platforms. Instagram is very aspirational. The content you find on there is more sophisticated and purposeful. I talk a little bit in the book about finding your natural light and arranging your food to tell a story. What's important with food photography is making sure it feels natural and not overly processed looking and edited,



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past couple of years. Consumers are more interested in authenticity and originality than the idolized perfectionism of the past. It's so important for you to just be who you are and share what you're good at, and if people find value in that, or find that relatable, they will want to be a part of that. Gone are the days when we look at this perfect representation of what your day might look like or what your food might look like, because that's not really achievable. Show your authentic self, and people will gravitate to that.

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Reading this book is a window on to the world of charcuterie boards.



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INTERVIEW



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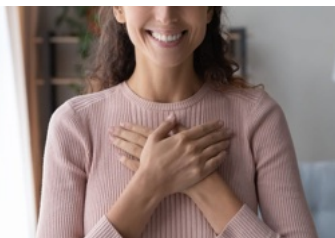
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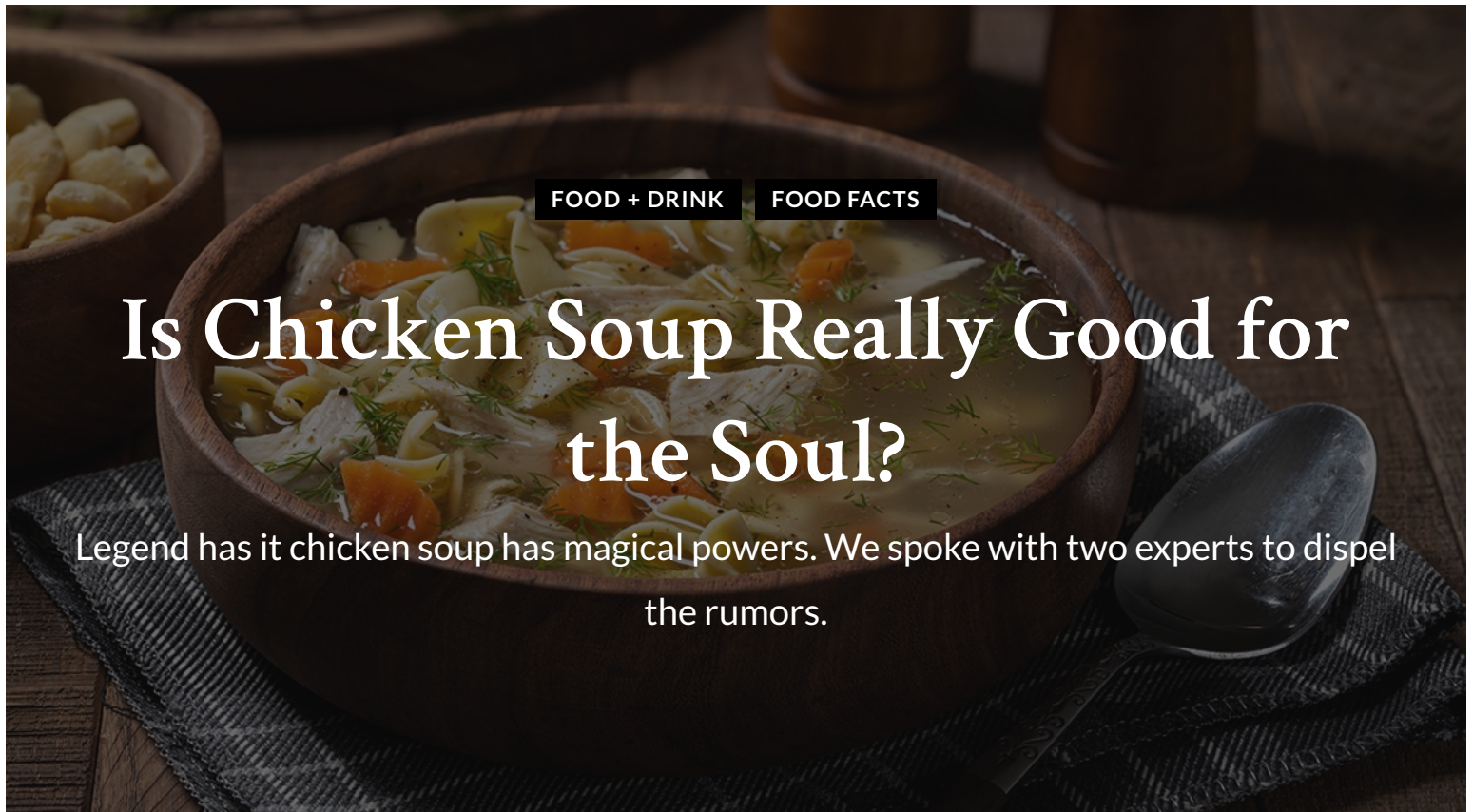


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Is Chicken Soup Really Good for the Soul?

Legend has it chicken soup has magical powers. We spoke with two experts to dispel the rumors.

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American adults catch an average of [two to three colds a year](#) — and at the first sign of sniffles, many reach for chicken soup.

An analysis conducted by Grubhub and ZocDoc found [soup deliveries rise in tandem with cold- and flu-related medical appointments](#). Orders for chicken noodle soup were up 31% when doctor's visits hit their highest point, and chicken rice soup deliveries increased by 42%.

Chicken noodle is Americans' [top soup choice](#) to offset chilly weather and the common cold, according to a separate survey, with more than a third (36%) of

respondents singling it out as the coziest type. And who doesn't like [cozy things](#)?

The notion that chicken soup is a remedy for illness isn't new. Evidence of it being used to address sickness dates back to at least ancient Greece, according to [Ken Albala](#), professor of history at California's University of the Pacific, who has written more than 25 books on food, including his most recent work *Noodle Soup: Recipes, Techniques, Obsession*.



Members of past civilizations found [soup](#) made with chicken fit their treatment criteria, Albala says, essentially serving as a dish that provides nourishment but isn't too taxing to consume.

"It's difficult to digest meat," Albala says. "The darker its color, the more energy it takes. [They were] trying to create a product that's easy to digest and would restore your fluids, and all parts of the body, very easily."

The science supporting soup

Sipping chicken soup when sick, Albala says, became such a common cultural practice over time that cold sufferers today will eat a bowl of it before even thinking about going to a doctor.

"The effects are not very dramatic compared to modern antibiotics and other drugs," he says. "When people get really sick, they don't expect chicken soup to cure them anymore — but it makes us feel good because it's warm and hydrating."

Research suggests consuming chicken soup may truly produce a positive physical effect. A Nebraska Medical Center study found that by inhibiting white blood cell activity its ingredients can help [meter an inflammatory response](#) that causes a number of cold symptoms.

“Chicken soup won’t cure your cold, but it may relieve your symptoms.”

- Nancy Mitchell, registered nurse

Chicken soup’s [high salt content](#) can help soothe sore throats, too, according to Nancy Mitchell, a registered nurse who’s worked for more than three decades as a senior care nurse and director of care, treating patients with respiratory infections and other ailments.

Mitchell says preparing a batch of soup with vegetables like garlic and turmeric, which contain antioxidants and nutrients that can help boost immunity, could also assist with the recovery process.

“Many people grew up [having] chicken soup for a cold, which is why it’s such a common remedy,” she says. “Chicken soup won’t cure your cold, but it may relieve your symptoms.”

Gearing up for cold and soup season

In addition to chicken noodle, a [heartly chicken chili](#) and other flavors of soup, such as rich [tomato bisque](#) or creamy [potato corn chowder](#), can also be therapeutic when you’re under the weather.

“Anything you drink that’s hot is going to open up your nasal passage — the steam itself will,” Albala says.

Convenient packaging formats, such as this [Harvest Vegetable with Pasta soup mix](#) that just requires adding water, make preparation easy if you're not feeling well.



[Hearty Chicken Noodle Soup Mix](#)



[Warm-Me-Up Tomato Bisque Bread Bowl Kit](#)



[Warm-Me-Up French Onion Soup Bread Bowl Kit](#)



[Soup Gift Basket](#)

Soup isn't the only thing people find soothing when they're sick. Foods that contain ginger, which one study involving throat infections found to have [anti-inflammatory properties](#), and warm beverages can also provide relief.

"[Hot tea](#) made with garlic, lemon, and [honey](#) is an excellent concoction for relieving flu symptoms," Mitchell says. "[This drink] is packed with antiviral compounds, vitamin C, and other essential antioxidants that help ease pain, reduce congestion, and promote recovery."

This is the time of year when people gravitate to more comforting foods and beverages, according to Mitchell.

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cases, she says. "Many of our bodies are just transitioning from two years of tension, and stress is a known factor contributing to weaker immune defenses — so it shouldn't come as a surprise if more people come down with a cold this year."



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and compelling stories about makers, places, and products. It features the
wine pairings, gifting advice, and entertainment tips. The Table is where
family gather, food and drinks are shared, and conversations take p