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Swing By!

ENTERTAINING RECIPES
& THE NEW ART
OF GATHERING



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Disco Wonderland

No theme gets me in the party mood more than disco. Even though its heyday has passed, everyone enjoys a disco-themed party. I especially love it for New Year's Eve; in my mind, it is everything the last night of the year should be.

The disco ball itself is the most fun prop ever. It informed the silvery sparkly decor of the table, from the tablecloth to the candles to the serving platters. Silver spray paint makes anything disco. We went to town, transforming faux hydrangeas and fruit into glittery table decor. We brought the appetizer board into the theme with an edible disco ball: after molding soft cheese into a round ball and applying squares of provolone cheese, we sprayed it with edible silver spray paint (see Resources). Finally, each name was written with a silver paint pen on black cardstock, and then

Silver and black connote elegance, and using these colors as inspiration makes for a stylish way to ring in the New Year. Disco ball earrings match the theme.





each place card went into a miniature disco ball place card holder set on black linen with silver trim.

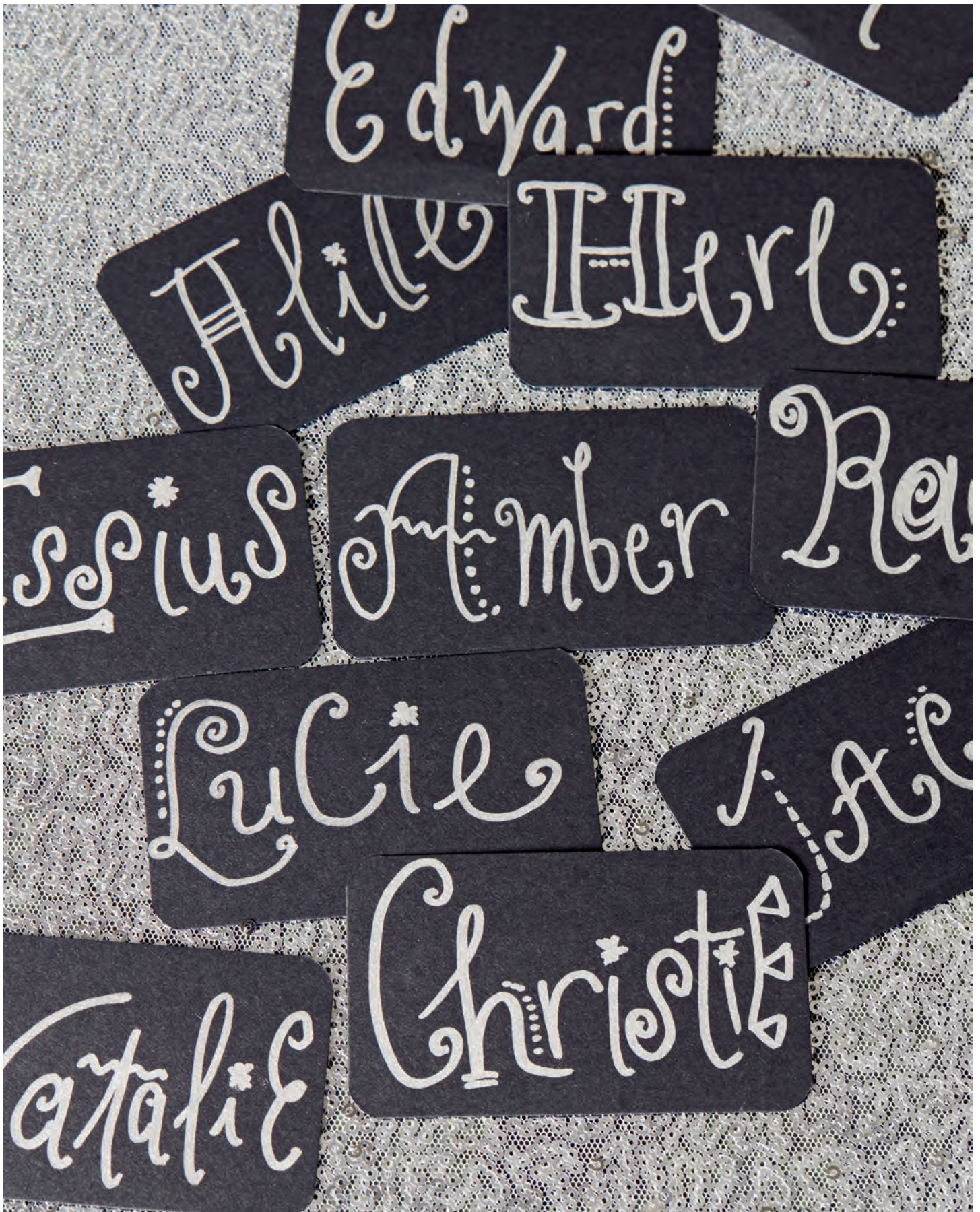
I leaned into sexy black foods for the main event. The party opener—the snack board—included only dark foods: blackberries, black licorice, charcoal crackers, licorice-flavored popcorn, dark concord grapes, and dried cherries. Sea bass, with its silver and black scales, fit into the theme perfectly, especially because it is a relatively light dish that does not preclude guests from dancing after dinner. The fish was arranged on a plate with black rice. There were manifold options for dessert, including a cake decorated with silver sprinkles, black and white ice creams finished off with black sesame bark, and Black-Tie Strawberries.

More than any other party in this book, music is deeply critical to this one. Short of a funky sixteen-piece band dressed in sparkles, the most authentic route would be to gather vintage disco albums and a turntable.

ABOVE AND OPPOSITE: Hydrangeas and fruits sprayed with silver paint adorn the silver-sequin tablecloth. Place cards are held in disco ball-shaped holders.



Timber



ABOVE: You don't have to hire a calligrapher to make eye-catching place cards. Here I wrote names on black cards in a festive silver ink with squiggles and dots. OPPOSITE: Squiggles are echoed in the unique napkin and place mat shapes.



Herb



Boogie Punch

Ice cubes do so much for a cocktail, and these—made in spherical silicone molds—recall the fun of a disco ball.

Makes 8 drinks

INGREDIENTS

8 spherical ice cubes
2 cups gin
1 cup grape juice
1 cup black currant juice
½ cup club soda
Edible silver powder

DIRECTIONS

1. At least 1 day before serving, make the spherical ice cubes by pouring water into the individual pockets of a spherical ice tray.

2. Before guests arrive, combine the gin, grape juice, and black currant juice in a pitcher and mix with a fork. Refrigerate until ready to serve, up to 12 hours in advance.

3. For each drink, put a spherical ice cube in a tumbler. Pour the drink into the tumbler to three quarters full. Top with club soda and sprinkle with edible silver powder.

Sea Bass with Black Rice

A balanced meal that happens to match the event.

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

3 cups black rice
Kosher salt
1 tablespoon black pepper
8 (4-ounce) sea bass fillets, skin on
Avocado oil
2 tablespoons minced chives

DIRECTIONS

1. In a medium saucepan over high heat, combine 5 ¼ cups water, the rice, and 3 teaspoon salt. Once boiling, cover, reduce the heat to low, and simmer for 30 minutes. Remove from the heat and let rest for 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork.

2. While the rice cooks, blot the sea bass fillets with paper towels and sprinkle both sides with salt and pepper. Set a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Once hot, add 2 teaspoons oil and swirl it around the pan. Carefully place the fish in the pan, skin side down. Cook until the fillets are white halfway up the side of the fillet, about 3 minutes. Flip and cook on the other side for 3 minutes. (If you need to cook the fillets in batches, put the cooked fillets on a baking sheet lined with parchment paper in a 200°F oven while you cook the remaining fillets. Add another couple teaspoons of oil to the pan.)

3. To plate, fill a small ramekin with rice. Put a serving plate over the ramekin and flip. Remove the ramekin to reveal a neat mound of rice. Place the fish alongside the rice and garnish with chives. Repeat for the remaining servings. Serve immediately.





HOW TO MAKE

Disco Cheeseboard

This is a fun addition to an evening party. The anchor is the disco cheese ball. To make it, I rolled softened goat cheese into a ball and placed it in the middle of a silver serving tray. Following the orientation of an actual disco ball, I covered it with sliced provolone cheese squares. Then, I used edible spray paint to make the whole thing silver. Around it, I filled the tray with dark snacks: black licorice wheels, chocolate-covered cashews, dried cherries, blackberries, licorice-flavored popcorn, sesame crackers, black seedless grapes, and dark chocolate.

ABOVE: Use silver sprinkles to decorate a cake—whether it's homemade or store-bought.
RIGHT: Black sesame brittle is the garnish on black and white ice creams served in old-fashioned sundae glasses.





Black-Tie Strawberries

A festive no-bake dessert for New Year's Eve, weddings, or birthdays.

Serves 8

INGREDIENTS

- 16 large strawberries of uniform size with stems, washed and dried
- 1 (12-ounce) bag white chocolate chips
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 (12-ounce) bag black Candy Melts (see Resources)

DIRECTIONS

1. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper.
2. Melt the white chocolate chips in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second increments, stirring in between each increment, until the white chocolate is completely melted. Stir in 1 ½ teaspoons olive oil.

3. Holding a strawberry by the stem, dip it into the white chocolate so all but the very top with stem is covered in chocolate.

4. Place on the prepared baking sheet, then continue with the remaining strawberries. Allow the white chocolate to harden at room temperature, approximately 1 ½ to 3 hours.

5. Melt the candy melts in a microwave-safe bowl in 30-second increments, stirring in between each increment, until the candy melts are completely liquid. Stir in the remaining 1 ½ teaspoons olive oil.

6. Holding a strawberry by the stem, dip each side into the melted candy melts on a diagonal from the bottom tip to the top edge of the white chocolate. This forms the shape of a tuxedo jacket. Place the strawberry on the baking sheet and continue with the remaining strawberries.

7. Dip a toothpick or skewer into melted candy melts and form little round button and a bow-tie shapes on the tuxedo shirt. Place on the baking sheet and continue with the remaining strawberries.

8. Allow the decorations to harden at room temperature, 2 to 3 hours.

9. Place the strawberries on a serving tray and serve the same day at room temperature.



THIS PAGE: Oreos, chocolate wafers, or other dark cookies can be stacked to create drama; it's like a champagne tower, but kid-friendly and easier to make.

