

INTERIORS
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COME DINE

WITH US

Now we're all foregoing eating out to entertain our friends at home, we asked four lifestyle experts for purse-friendly creative advice on entertaining with élan, whatever the occasion

Report SARA EMSLIE

Photographs ANDREW HAYES WATKINS



THE FLORIST

Kally Ellis of London florist McQueens creates an elegant birthday supper using her expertise to stunning effect, yet on a budget

Kally's rustic wooden table and church chairs have been given a smart makeover with a crisp white linen tablecloth and matching napkins. Tall glass candlesticks add height while simple organic-shaped pasta bowls in soft muted tones from Brickett Davda (from £18 for a bowl, tel: 020 7286 1556) add a stylish simplicity to the occasion. An abundance of fresh softly scented flowers really sets the scene without breaking the bank. 'A few flowers can go a long way if you separate them into little containers and group them cleverly,' says Kally. 'You can use bud vases, shot glasses, pretty little cups, even milk bottles. The effect will still be stunning.' Kally is a real fan of foraging in

ABOVE Make a few flowers go a long way by alternating a single sweet avalanche rose with a sprig of *Viburnum opulus* (guelder rose) in a row of simple glass bud vases. Kally has placed branches of silver birch in tank vases for height and added bun moss, pale pink anne marie hyacinths (attached to the branches with florist's wire) and McQueens scented peony candles to stunning effect on the mantelpiece. **INSET TOP LEFT** Small individual pink rose buds are attached to place cards. **INSET TOP RIGHT** Kally's rustic church chairs have been given a pretty makeover with Angelina pale pink double tulips placed in the little shelf on the back



the garden and bringing the outside in. 'Just step into the garden, have a nose around and let your imagination run wild. Twigs, moss, berries, cones can all be used to spectacular effect, and it doesn't cost a penny!' As for flowers, 'I love whatever is in season – peonies in summer, snowdrops in winter, daffs in spring – they are fresh, at their very best and normally the least expensive option. Let the seasons guide you.'

Signature cocktail? 'A glass of champagne is my favourite way to welcome friends – sometimes with a drop of organic elderflower cordial for a delicious zing. Or in the summer, if I'm cooking Italian, I'll serve bellinis [prosecco with peach juice], which are heavenly.'

Signature dish? Kally nods to her Greek roots with her mother's recipes: 'My signature dish is avgolemono – chicken and rice broth flavoured with lemon and thickened with egg. It's the ultimate comfort food.'

Dream dinner party line-up? 'Audrey Hepburn, as my daughter is obsessed with her, and Snoop Dogg for my son. For my husband I'd invite Victoria Wood – I'm sure they'd laugh their way through the meal – and for me, well, Harvey Keitel would do nicely...'

McQueens and McQueens Flower School, tel: 020 7251 5505; mcqueens.co.uk. YOU readers will be given a 15 per cent discount on all courses, which include one-day courses from £290, such as hand-tied bouquets on 20 April, table centres on 22 April, and vase arrangements on 28 April. Please mention YOU magazine when booking