

Celia Bryce discovers the perfect, hassle-free way to throw a great dinner party...

## if you can't stand the heat



Photo: Rick Seibel

DO IT! It's a special occasion and you want to throw a big dinner party. You want to make everyone feel special, something new, exciting, and it's all about you. You want glowing reviews, glowing coffee and a table cloth which fits the occasion. You want flowers, candles, the works. Of course you do. But hang on a minute!

Did you think back to the last dinner party you gave. When you scratched around looking for plates that weren't cracked, for cutlery that matched. When you worried over starters, puzzled over mains and stressed over desserts. When you scolded around the table keeping up guests, asking away plates. When you kept watch on ovens, pans, grill and telly, checking on everyone, checking that they were having a good time. What a juggling act!

And afterwards, the devastation, the picking through debris, the cleaning up, the sweaters. Great wasn't it? Well, every evening. Of course it isn't, you like otherwise we wouldn't do it. Would we!

So what about an alternative? When you can enjoy these special occasions along with your guests. When you can be a guest in your own home, put up your feet afterwards and relax in the knowledge that your kitchen will be tidy, jobs will be washed and floors cleaned.

Socialist catering can offer you just the thing you're looking for - someone to do all the work while you sit back and enjoy.

Now this is not a cheap option, but when you think of the costs of day, a need for right the time staff, shopping, preparing, cooking and serving, the washing, spent washing pans, loading, dishwasher and general restoration of the kitchen afterwards, it's money well spent.

And after all, it is a special occasion - isn't it?

We tried out one such company based in South Shields recently. Epicurus, who provide a high quality dinner party and

other service staff, provided us with a memorable evening.

Managing Chef Christopher Hoyle was recently nominated for a 'Young Entrepreneur Award' and it's easy to see why. Not only supplying excellent evening meals we needed - glasses, linen, crockery and cutlery - the chef itself was fantastic and matched anything to be found in high class city restaurants. We didn't have to fuss, we didn't have to work and last of all we had the knowledge that we could relax before, during and after the event.

A most successful dinner party.

So if you wanted to try this, option how much would it cost? There are a number of menus under Epicurus' Private Fine Dining Selection. Prices vary of course, depending on how many guests you are inviting and which menu you choose. Cost per head can range from £22.50 to £30 which includes a chef and waitress for the evening.

All menus can be processed through the internet but you can have a pre-dinner consultation with the chef where menu and costs can be discussed on a one-to-one basis. You can replace or add dishes to the menu, you can even create your own, while any particular dietary requirements can be catered for if sufficient notice is given.

This consultation is also an ideal opportunity for the chef to check out any particular issues with the working area, to particularise the menu.

There's no need to worry if you feel the kitchen doesn't come up to scratch, that your furniture shows signs of staining or that at your party are a bit past their best. Epicurus bring enough of their own cooking equipment to serve up a beautiful meal in any situation.

Epicurus are at 201 Oak Road, West Park, Chilton Industrial Estate, South Shields, NE22 0EP.

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