



INTIMATE Affair

Matilda's owner Dana Small hosts a pre-holiday luncheon at her Stuart home for a few of her closest friends

BY MICHELLE LEE RIBEIRO | PHOTOGRAPHY BY JERRY RABINOWITZ

When it comes to throwing a top-notch, elegant, laid-back soirée, Dana Small has it down. The Stuart-based designer and owner of *Matilda's* has mastered the art of coastal, carefree chic. "I would love to be living in the Bahamas," she says. "And I always want my house to feel like you're in the islands. I've spent numerous Christmases on Harbor Island, and everything is very simple there. I like to say 'KISS'—keep it simply stylish."

This season, Small decided to throw a festive, pre-holiday ladies' luncheon for some of her dearest gal pals. "These are my lifelong friends," she says. "I've lived in Stuart for 20 years, and I've known

all of them since I moved here. They're my people." The shindig also provided everyone a rare opportunity in these pandemic days to get dressed up. "Entertaining at home has never been more relevant and real," says Small. "It's nice to spice up your dinner table—and your life—with friends who mean the most to you. I love doing things for friends and showing them how much I appreciate them. You need your little posse."

On these pages, see the luncheon in full swing—and meet the most important member of Small's posse, her Cavalier King Charles Spaniel, Calypso (a.k.a. "Party Dog").

Soup's On!

For this luncheon, Small wanted to keep the menu light. She whipped up this cream of asparagus soup topped with parsley, roasted peppers, and asparagus tips. The soup was accompanied by a mixed green salad, as well as cucumber tea sandwiches from Chantal's. "I've been using Chantal's for all of my events for 20 years," she says of the Stuart-based catering company.



Signature Sips

"There is always a signature cocktail when you come to my house," says Small. When guests enter her home, she greets them at the wicker bar (pictured at right), which is set with the cocktail of the day/evening. For this affair, she opted for a DIY Champagne bar. Guests had the option of Prosecco or rosé, which they could infuse with rosemary, pineapple, blood orange pomegranate, or mint. Pre-lunch snacks were served with the cocktails (turn the page for more details about the appetizers).





Bits and Bites

Before moving into the dining room for lunch, Small and her friends caught up over cocktails and snacks in the living room. Light bites were catered by The Board Babes, who created these drool-worthy charcuterie boards featuring fresh seasonal fruits such as raspberries and cranberries, salmon, star-shaped crackers, and an array of cheeses.





Island Vibes

"As a designer, I have always loved creating tablescapes," says Small. "It has been a passion of mine since I was a child—Mom and Dad never had a problem asking me to set the table!" For this holiday fête, she wanted to exude an island vibe—"more on the whimsical side," she says. Rattan tabletop elements (like the Amanda Lindroth pagodas) complement Small's wicker chairs, while pops of red in the fresh lilies, glassware, and tablecloth combine with green palms and pine in homage to the Christmas holiday. The printed tablecloth is made by a designer Small came across on Instagram. "India is having a moment—in everything from textiles to clothing to napkins," she says. "I stumbled upon this girl on Instagram last spring and can't get enough of her prints." To make the dining space more festive, she hung paper snowflakes and candy apple red satin Chinese lanterns from the ceiling. "I love ceiling decor," she says. "It's a nice framing device and a little surprise element that adds a lot." ♦



STYLE NOTES

- Floral-Print Tablecloth and Napkins: India Armary
- Dining Plates: Tiffany & Co.
- Rattan Centerpieces and Chargers: Matilda's
- Flatware and Glassware: Matilda's
- Napkin Rings and Palm Tree Cocktail Napkins: Matilda's
- Floral Arrangements: Harbour Bay Florist
- Greenery and Garland: Harbour Bay Florist
- Snowflake and Lantern Ceiling Decor: Luna Bazaar
- Wicker Dining Chairs: Williams-Sonoma
- Charcuterie Boards: The Board Babes

