



***Pouring It On:** A love of all things classical, gilded, and gorgeous is evident throughout Crosby's abode, where Boykin spaniel Lula (right) enjoys the good life.*



## Entertaining 101

"Being invited to a home for a meal is the greatest compliment," says Crosby, who believes entertaining should be a pleasure, not a chore, and need not require polished silver and pressed linens. Get comfortable with your personal style, he advises, and guests will be comfortable, too. Mitchell's tips on hosting:

- ❁ **Serve with flair:** "Currently, I dress up Champagne or Pellegrino with a splash of blueberry juice and a frozen berry garnish. How can you turn it down?"
- ❁ **Drop-in ready:** Keep cocktail nibbles on hand. "Present them well, and your job is done." His faves: Spanish Marcona almonds in olive oil, sugared pecans, and benne wafers.
- ❁ **Be prepared:** Know what dish you will serve in and the utensil that will accompany.
- ❁ **Smile:** Have confidence and enjoy the success of entertaining graciously.

Pull behind Mitchell Crosby's car in his shaded driveway, and the first thing you notice is his license plate: "PARTYS" it announces. This is a man who knows how to have a good time. As event planner extraordinaire of JMC Charleston (the J. stands for Jay), Crosby can wine and dine masses or turn a theme party into an unforgettable affair. And when at home, he's no less serious about the finer points of entertaining. In fact, for Crosby, "personal style" and "hospitality" are synonymous.

"Living well is the best revenge" would be an apt bumper sticker to complement his vanity plate. Crosby is refreshingly old-school; he sweats the small stuff (without breaking a sweat), indulges in etiquette, and doesn't skimp on life's little luxuries: hem-stitched linen napkins, air-dried sheets, candles and fresh flowers, and good wooden coat hangers—"the Joan Crawford of it all!"

The Old Windemere home that he and his partner, Randall Felkel, bought 14 years ago on an oak-lined drive is formal without being stuffy, with Italian marble in the front foyer; gilt wing chairs in the living room; and artful displays of favorite things, from a collection of black-and-white Wedgwood bisque to seashells and coral, à la Tony

Duquette. The living and dining rooms are thoughtfully appointed to accommodate a houseful for a grand Sunday brunch or a spur of the moment intimate dinner party.

Crosby, a native Charlestonian and one of eight children of the Crosby Seafood family, comes by his talents honestly. "My family has always had big celebrations. Everyone embraces great food and enjoys each other's company," he says. Master of the genteel touch, he's unabashed about upholding old Southern traditions, like using menu cards and fine china. The dining room corner cabinet is packed with tabletop silver, and a smart kitchen renovation created room for a small office area with shelving for copious cookbooks and china storage—for all six sets!

"I always enjoy seeing the beauty in how other people live," says Crosby, who has taken his hospitality cues from local role models, such as Mary Ramsey ("who enjoys every minute of someone else's hospitality, as well as offering it herself") and the late Witsell Neyle ("who lived life grandly and entertained royally in a tiny efficiency apartment"). In that spirit, Crosby's cozy home is party central, not because his space is grand, but because it is welcoming and his approach to life is one of invitation.

# Mitchell Crosby Open-Door Luxe



*“You should be known for one thing—your signature dish or drink, for example. I want to be known for putting fun people together, with the addition of great menus and libations.”*