

(INSPIRATION)

## Party, On!

New gadgets and sites to help you plan the perfect 21st-century holiday bash

**THE INVITE:** Though **Evite** is ubiquitous, don't count out the competition. BlackBerry users will like **socializr.com** because its e-mails include all the party details—no link-clicking required. And you can add music or video to the hundreds of invitation palettes on offer. At **mypunchbowl.com**, party-planning gets a democratic spin: Guests can vote on potential days and times for the shindig. You can also use the After Party feature to thank your friends and upload photos of the night's revels.

**THE LOOK:** "The right light is more important than flowers or any other kind of decoration," says Jennifer Rothman of Francesca Events in New York City. To get that perfect warm glow for an at-home gathering, Rothman recommends replacing your everyday bulbs with **colored compact fluorescent lights** in skin-flattering tones (blue and red) and scattering battery-powered LED **votive candles** around the party space (flamelesscandles.net).

**THE DRINKS:** If a full bar takes up too much of

your space and budget, Rothman suggests creating a signature drink for the night. Browse the recipes at **drinkoftheweek.com** or **barschool.com**; save a trip to the liquor store by checking out the **Esquire Drinks Database** (esquire.com/drinks), where you can search for cocktails that use the spirits you already have at home.

**THE MUSIC:** Accessorize your iPod to tap your guests' singing talents. The **Griffin iKaraoke** microphone (\$50) fades the lead vocals on any song in your repertoire; hard-core karaoke fans will love Brookstone's **Ion Portable PA System for iPod** (\$300), with mic, amp, and iPod dock, all on wheels.

**THE AFTERMATH:** Alas, not all of us can employ an **iRobot Roomba**—a vacuum-cleaning 'bot shaped like a Bundt cake—to do the dirty work after the guests have left (starting at \$130 with a 30-day guarantee; irobot.com). But for happier proof of a night well spent, there are always (crisp, clean!) party pictures. The Smile Shutter Mode



on the sleek **Sony Cyber-shot** (starting at \$180) detects exactly when your subject is saying cheese; **GE's** line of affordable cameras (starting at \$90) can pick up on a smile and an ill-timed blink. For details see *Shop Guide*. —**FARAH MILLER**

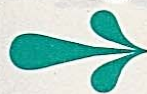
### Note to Self Only Connect

"When we examine a common product like a T-shirt, we discover that it has touched many lives, some very negatively, and may have poisoned people, animals, and natural resources.

The web of connections is complicated, but having even a glimpse opens the door to different choices.... Frankly, awareness of connections can sometimes interfere with our ease and pleasure—but not with our joy."

—**ZOE WEIL**, IN *MOST GOOD, LEAST HARM: A SIMPLE PRINCIPLE FOR A BETTER WORLD AND MEANINGFUL LIFE* (ATRIA/BEYOND WORDS)

## Paging All Chefs



THE AMATEUR CHEF'S RECIPE LIBRARY is often a hodgepodge of magazine clippings, computer files, and ancient index cards gone soft as cloth. But now disorganized foodies can open **TasteBook** (tastebook.com), where making a personalized cookbook—for yourself or as a one-of-a-kind gift—is nearly as easy as creating a Facebook profile. Just fill in the user-friendly fields to include your own recipes and upload photos to illustrate each dish; you can also borrow recipes from top Web sites (like foodnetwork.com and epicurious.com). Give TasteBook about a week to mail you the resulting hardcover volume: handsome and sturdy, with wipeable spiral-bound pages and color-tabbed dividers for quick skimming (\$20 for 25 recipes; \$35 for 100 recipes).

—**KATIE ARNOLD-RATLIFF**



**If you have only... 5 minutes:** Coo over the sea critters (seals, penguins, baby polar bears!) on the free holiday e-cards at **oceanconservancy.org**. By e-mailing your season's greetings, you can help reduce the typical 25 percent increase in waste during the holidays.

