

# The Cocktail Class

The get-together that lost its good name when George and Martha slashed and burned their way through Edward Albee's boozy classic "Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?" is back in favor in a big way.

There are two ways to party during the cocktail hour today: with a reception, involving only a quick drink and light, passed hors d'oeuvres before guests go on to dinner elsewhere; and with the cocktail buffet, the current trend. It's half the cost of a seated dinner, and have or have not, that's always nice. Plus, a buffet tends to stimulate socializing. Heard enough about Sa-

## *A movable feast for a group on the go*

mantha and her fleas? Nibble, sip and move on.

Here's what's new. In the past, the finger food served wasn't healthful or filling. After too many salty nuts and too much cheese, you're left wondering, "Am I still hungry?" So we asked caterer Susan Gage to come up with a serious menu. No two ways about it, her Tuscan-inspired hors d'oeuvres are robust and delicious. And everything—from the jazzy Umbrian pizza and grilled seafood and bean salad on down the list to the one-bite sweets—is perfect for small plates and (very important) easy to eat while standing. Meanwhile, what do you do with that cocktail in the other hand? Sorry. Your solution is as good as ours. Cheers! —*Walter Nicholls*

Opposite page: the buffet service. This page from top: a party setting; grilled crudite, Tuscan bean salad and seafood spiedini with fennel, artichokes and basil cream dip; mushrooms and artichoke hearts marinated in a Dijon vinaigrette, alternating slices of Umbrian and chevre-leek pizza and radicchio cups filled with shrimp salad.

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