

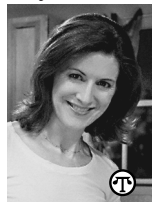
# Cooking Corner



## Toast Togetherness By Starting Your Own Dinner Club

by Ceci Carmichael

(NAPSA)—With the economy slowing down and gas prices quickly rising, Americans are all feeling the aches and pains of cutting back. However, in a search for ways to cut costs, cities across the



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country are seeing an increase in dinner clubs, proving cutting back doesn't have to mean giving up dining with friends.

A much more affordable way of getting together than always going out on the town, dinner clubs are no longer the stuffy parties of years past. Today's wine-and-dine dinner clubs cater to those with more relaxed and affordable tastes and can be as simple as opening a bottle of wine and getting everyone together and involved. Creating a dinner club and setting a regular schedule for gatherings ensures you will always have a set time to catch up with friends and family. Here are some tips to help you get started:

- **Pick a theme.** Base your dinner club gathering on a recent trip or a movie you loved, etc. Keep it close to home by highlighting local foods or get creative and host a wine-tasting dinner, pairing several wines with each course.

A great way to show people that wine doesn't have to be intimidating, brands like Gallo Family Vineyards are perfect for this type of gathering, as the wines are complex yet affordable, so you can sample multiple varietals without breaking your dinner club budget.

- **Plan your menu with your guests in mind.** Consider your guests' likes, dislikes and any food



**What could be more satisfying than spending time with family and friends over good food and delicious yet easily approachable wines?**

allergies or restrictions before you decide on a menu. Record this information on a sign-up sheet and send the list to the group to keep as a reference. Having affordable wine on hand is an excellent way to class up your gathering while also turning the night into a special occasion.

Be sure to find out what types of wine people like and have enough bottles of white and red for everyone to enjoy and pair perfectly with their dinner. Gallo Family Vineyards 187-mL 4-packs make it easy to pair favorite wines with savory recipes featured right on the packaging. A crisp Chardonnay goes wonderfully with grilled chicken breasts, or Merlot pairs nicely with pork chops in a plum and red onion sauce, etc.

- **Cut corners where you can.** Remember, almost everything these days can be bought pre-chopped, shredded and minced.

No time for dessert? Cut up some fresh fruit and toss with Gallo Family Vineyards Moscato. Served with a dollop of whipping cream, it's a quick and easy but decadent dessert.

Ultimately, a successful dinner

party comes down to good, simple food, cooked with your own personal flair and great company. Here's an easy recipe to serve at your first dinner club gathering:

### Strawberries al Moscato with Vanilla Cream

#### Ingredients

- 1 pint fresh, ripe strawberries
- 2 tablespoons Twin Valley Moscato
- 2 teaspoons (or to taste) honey
- 1 teaspoon fresh-squeezed lemon juice
- 1 cup cold whipping cream
- 1 teaspoon vanilla extract
- 2 tablespoons granulated sugar
- 8 sprigs fresh mint

#### Instructions

**Wash and hull the strawberries and cut into quarters. Toss berries in a mixing bowl with the Moscato, honey and lemon juice. Allow berries to macerate for 10 minutes before serving. In a separate bowl, beat the cream with the vanilla extract and sugar until soft peaks form. Serve berries in chilled bowls or glasses, garnish with a dollop of cream and sprig of mint.**

**Serves: 4**

*Suggested wine: Gallo Family Vineyards Moscato*

For step-by-step directions on starting a dinner club, visit [www.GalloFamily.com/dinnerclub](http://www.GalloFamily.com/dinnerclub). Ceci Carmichael is a cooking/entertaining expert and spokesperson for Gallo Family Vineyards' Wine & Dine Dinner Club.