



Being a Good Host

Gracious me

Posted on November 1, 2012 by Lori Johnston



In the South, entertaining is a blend of politeness and protocol. Both formal and casual gatherings reflect our upbringing, our sense of pride in our homes, and the value we place on family and friendships. We asked noted Georgia hosts to reflect on Southern hospitality, current practices, and traditions that are starting to disappear.

"You want everyone to feel like they're special. Company is not a burden; company is a pleasure. Vince is an extremely wonderful host in that he is always outside greeting people. [When they leave] he walks everybody out of the house to the car. I try very hard to spend time with everybody, one on one . . . When we first moved to Athens, I remember at four o'clock one afternoon this lady rang my doorbell, and she was all dressed up in her hat and gloves. She walked in and she had her calling card. She said, 'Where is your calling card bench?' I said, 'What?' I didn't even know what a calling card was. That introduced me to [entertaining in Georgia] real quickly." —*Barbara Dooley, author, media personality, real estate agent, and wife of Vince Dooley, former football coach and athletic director at UGA*

"Southerners grow up with that mentality of extending a kind handshake, a smile across a picket fence. My children [ages sixteen, thirteen, and ten] are being raised that if someone comes in a room, to stand up and extend a hand. My kids have been known to greet people at the door and ask them if they can get them a drink. I want people to feel comfortable, and I want them to leave feeling like they had a great night." —*Danielle Rollins, author, cofounder and chair of several Atlanta charities*

"My mom is from Little Rock, Arkansas. She's really big on making sure that everyone who comes over is entertained. I just learned growing up how important it was to treat people right. That directly correlates to what I do. It's important to give people more than a party; you give them an experience. The most important thing that I can give them is a memory . . . You cater to the ladies. I make sure that at every party, I give out [drinks] to different groups of girls. If the ladies are having fun, they're on Twitter, they're on Facebook, they're posting pictures on Instagram." —*Cecil Cross II, owner of C.*

Cross Events, an event planning and marketing firm that has collaborated with celebrities such as Usher, Erykah Badu, Ludacris, Kevin Hart, and Outkast

"We're losing a lot of those gracious gestures that we grew up with, like sterling flatware. A lot of younger Atlantans no longer have sterling flatware. Oftentimes that's a decision not based on the cost, but just because they don't want to bother with having to polish it. When you're entertaining, you want to make that extra effort. A hallmark of Southern hospitality is incorporating family heirlooms, because in the South, we revere our ancestors. It's bringing your history into how you entertain." — *Jennifer Boles, style blogger at thepeakofchic.com and House Beautiful contributing editor*

"Sitting down at a table and having a great conversation, that's what I like the most. It's 'What book are you reading? Have you seen any good movies lately?' You try to stay away from politics and religion . . . People who live in the South are also very gracious about sending handwritten thank-you notes." — *Peg Balzer, patron (with husband Bill) of Theatrical Outfit and other Downtown nonprofit organizations*

Photograph by John Kernick. This article originally appeared in the November 2012 issue.

Copyright 2013, Atlanta Magazine