

Over the last year, I've had the privilege of speaking to many groups of women . . . and a few men, too! As you have invited me into your homes, your garden clubs, your churches, and community organizations, I'm reminded over and over again why I wrote *Effortless Entertaining*. Wherever I go, guests talk about how much they enjoy being in each other's homes, and yet most also tell me they don't entertain as often as they would like. This is why I wrote *Effortless Entertaining* – to help others welcome family and friends into their homes easily and graciously.

Although we all want to entertain, the reasons we don't are familiar. We may feel the need for our homes to be stylish and ship-shape. All of a sudden the throw pillows on the porch sofa that were perfectly fine yesterday look like a bunch of teenagers have been using them in a pillow fight – and maybe they have! We begin to feel a little anxious about who to invite, what to cook, and whether we have everything we need . . . plates, napkins, and then the flowers! Some like to cook, but don't want to set tables and do flowers. Others like to do flowers and set the table, but don't like to cook. Some of the reasons we're reluctant to entertain seem to resonate with everyone. Even the seasoned host has reservations.

As I was working on this newsletter, I attended a fundraising event and was chatting with a lovely woman about entertaining in our homes. She lamented that she feels the need for everything to “be perfect” here in Charlotte, whereas in the mountains she feels a little more at ease. She told me that although she loves to cook and is a good cook, she worries about everything being “just so.” She often hires a caterer. I shared with her some of my thoughts on entertaining, beginning with Step One: *Entertaining Is Not a Performance. It's a Gift of Friendship*. By the end of the conversation, I could see

the relief and renewed enthusiasm she was feeling.

One guest at a recent event had gotten out of the habit of entertaining. Upon receiving *Effortless Entertaining* for Christmas last year, she committed to hosting a dinner party every month. It was exciting to hear how much fun she was having! Another guest shared that she had prepared the Lawdashion's Pork Tenderloin for a recent dinner party. She said it was fabulous and, for the first time, she was relaxed and had everything done when her guests arrived. She did have an unfortunate encounter with her mandoline while slicing the potatoes. Warning – do not watch football and use a mandoline! If you insist on doing both, wear cut-resistant gloves. See *Tips & Quips*, page 350, and *Sources & Resources*, page 380. Remember, you can also find these items on the website.

Knowing that I'm helping hosts – from the most reluctant to the most experienced – gain more confidence about entertaining is what I love most about the impact of *Effortless Entertaining*. The minute you realize everything doesn't need to be “perfect” when you invite someone to your home, the more you'll enjoy entertaining. The time we spend together is what really matters. You don't have to do things the way I do them, or the way other friends do. Find your own style, then file those negative voices in your head in the way-way back of the linen closet. It bears repeating: Your guests will enjoy themselves more if they see you having fun and not taking yourself too seriously.

I share these thoughts to encourage and inspire you to entertain others in your home. Don't forget, though . . . you actually have to invite people over! EE is not a theoretical exercise. Roll up your sleeves and set the table! In addition to your *Effortless Entertaining* guide, members have received monthly newsletters adding



186 pages to the guide since January! Choose a menu – the recipes are easy to prepare, and it's all made even easier with the GamePlan and Shopping List. Access *Sources & Resources* to find tabletop items so that you . . . *Don't Wait for the Party to Be Ready for the Party* (Step Eight).

Be in touch with me to ask any questions you might have. I would love to hear from you! Welcoming friends into our homes starts with a few simple first steps. Take the time to sit with a cup of coffee, look at your calendar, find a night, make a list of people you would like to invite, and choose a menu. Pick up the phone or send an email. Just do it! You'll be glad you did!

DeeDee

I close my talks with this
quote from John Lennon:

*“It matters not who you
love, where you love, why
you love, when you love,
or how you love. It matters
only that you love.”*

So, let's get on with it!
Let's love our family and friends
and invite them to dinner!