



Dinner on Demand

At once elaborate and streamlined, the party-in-a-box might mark a new mode of entertaining.

I spent my 28th birthday on my couch, binge-watching Netflix and fantasizing about cake. It was March of 2020, and my local grocery store had run out of eggs, sugar, and flour. It was a minor grievance in the scheme of things. But come 2021, it wasn't exactly something I wanted to repeat. So it was with the grace of Dionysus that a few weeks before my second pandemic birthday, I stumbled upon Savour. An app that allows users to book chefs—from restaurants like Eleven Madison Park, Momofuku, and Noma—Savour also arranges everything from menus to table mats. A few taps of my phone and I'd booked a family-style meal by chef Akiko Thurnauer, formerly of Nobu. The next Thursday, she knocked on my door, hot-pink eye shadow swiped across her eyes and a basket of Bao buns on her arm.

Right now, in many places, we're in an awkward phase of socializing. After a year and a half of pandemic living, most of us are desperate to see people beyond our bubble. As Bronson van Wyck, author of *Born to Party, Forced to Work*, sums it up: "We're all ready for a true rager. Parties—actual full-on parties—have been in a medically induced coma." Such gatherings are not just frivolous entertainment—they are crucial to our well-being: "Much of what fulfills us are the bonds we create with other people, and more often than not, those bonds materialize through physical interactions," wrote researchers in an August 2020 study titled "The Dangers of Social Distancing." And yet, many of us may feel a lingering discomfort at the prospect of sharing respiratory droplets in the name of celebration.

Social gatherings may remain, for some, domestic.

Thankfully, a set of new party services is stepping in to elevate at-home entertaining. In addition to Savour, there's Celebration

BOWLED OVER

A tablescape from Party by Numbers (TOP), a dish designed by chef Yann Nury (MIDDLE), and a setting from Celebration Home (BOTTOM).



Home, which was created by event planner Jennifer Zabinski and Met-gala caterer Olivier Cheng and which offers packages like "A Night at the Opera" or "Around the Farmer's Market." They'll send you everything you need in a giant box—from the asparagus tarte tatin to the Jardin du Luxembourg scent diffuser. "It's like your own little salon," says Zabinski. The new company Party by Numbers will pack a midcentury bar cart with everything from the Aperol aperitif to the olive-

branch arrangement to the Bose speakers piping in the sounds of the Sanremo Music Festival. Recently they got the approval of the James Beard Foundation's Zero Food-print organization for their carbon-neutral measures.

Then there's the fashionable fleet of mobile mixologists. The Maybourne Beverly Hills in Los Angeles fits an entire bar in the back of an Escalade that it can dispatch to your driveway. Meanwhile, famed French chef Yann Nury has turned his 1985 Land Rover into a roaming happy hour, making stops in the Hamptons, Nantucket, and Rhode Is-



land. For a little extra, he'll tow along his vintage Airstream, retro-formatted with a wood-fire grill.

Will these services eventually become fossils of the Fauci era? "I think over the past year, people really learned—and fell in love with—the joys of home entertaining," says Party by Numbers cofounder Nicky Balestrieri. The pandemic, if anything, taught us how a few close relationships can sustain the soul more potently than a dozen diffuse ones. "Hospitality—the act of breaking bread together—has in many ways never been more present," muses van Wyck, "with one key difference: It's more-is-more for the people who matter the most." —ELISE TAYLOR

