

Tips & Tricks: Holiday Entertaining with Le Basque's Alejandro Muguerza

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If you live in Miami, then you've probably heard of **Le Basque** – or no doubt gone to one of their over-the-top, can't-stop-talking-about-it soirées. The brainchild of Alejandro Muguerza, President and visual mastermind behind the brand, this Miami-based catering and production design company has built a reputation for its unparalleled service, flair and renowned "savoir-fair." Founded in 1991, Le Basque has since thrown parties all over South Florida and beyond, impressing clients like President Barack Obama, President Clinton, Senator Hillary Clinton, John Kerry, Al Gore, the King and Queen of Spain, Don Juan Carlos, Armani, Cartier, Yves St. Laurent, Harry Winston, Ferrari and more. Led by their fearless leader, Le Basque has been the creative genius behind some of the Magic City's hottest events, most notably: Fairchild Gardens' famous annual event, "Gala in the Garden," which it has produced for more than a decade.



And because he's clearly an expert host, we wanted to sit down with him – just in time for the holidays – to get his tips and tricks on how to handle holiday entertaining like the pros. Here's what he had to say:

Serve the right food. "When hosting an elegant holiday soiree, you can begin by serving guests the *Olive Ceviche and Orange Campari Sorbet* or the *Arugula with Marinated Balsamic Strawberries and Shaved Parmesan*; followed by something light, like the *Seared Diver Scallops with Coffee Dust, Shaved White Asparagus, White Endive and Coffee Vinaigrette*. For the best finish, end with the decadent and *Bitter Dark & White Chocolate Napoleon and Roasted Kumquats*."

Use simple recipes to make your life easier. "There's already enough going on during the holidays – so don't let cooking and entertaining add to your stress. Take the simple recipes above, for example. They can all be prepared ahead of time, while the scallops can be finished in the oven just before serving, so you can enjoy a perfectly relaxed evening with your guests."



Olive Ceviche

Try to coordinate the color of your china with the table decor. “If the china has gold elements, use gold-brushed pomegranates and votives mixed with magnolia leaves. If the feel is contemporary and in grey, use metal-slate gray color ornaments, silver, Dusty miller with its wonderful gray and green foliage, and white Amaryllis as a flower element.”

Finally, always keep the basics in mind. “My three essential rules for being a good host is to keep it chic and simple, serve what you know and don’t try too hard to impress.”

To kick-off the inspiration for your next holiday fête, the recipe for Alejandro's own *Arugula with Marinated Balsamic Strawberries and Shaved Parmesan* is below:

INGREDIENTS: 1 pint of medium strawberries, 1/4 cup balsamic vinegar, 2 tablespoons of brown sugar, 4 ounces of shaved Parmesan, 1 cup of Arugula, 2 ounces of extra light olive oil and Maldon pink peppercorn salt.

RECIPE: Cut strawberries into thin rounds. Place them in a bowl, and pour vinegar, brown sugar, olive oil and a pinch of Maldon salt over the strawberries. Stir and let sit for 5-10 minutes.

PLATE: With a slotted spoon, place half of the sliced marinated strawberries on a white plate. Top it off with 1/2 cup of Arugula and one ounce of shaved Parmesan. Repeat this for one more plate. Serve and enjoy.

And with that, let the holiday entertaining begin.

