

HOME FOR THE

H O L I D A Y S
2013

Prep the Halls!

Fresh decorating ideas and fun projects for the family

• PLUS: **Schedule these home repairs and upgrades before visitors arrive**

Holiday Celeb: Ali Larter

Actress Ali Larter shares her favorite holiday recipes and décor ideas

Cooks in the Kitchen

Get your kitchen ready for the invasion of guest chefs and bakers

Glitz & Glam

These fun craft projects add sparkle to mundane objects

INSIDE: Fresh, Festive Florals | Guest Room Rescue | Cozy Crafting



Reveling in the Holidays

Actress **Ali Larter** is a serial entertainer – in TV, films and at home. She shares her favorite holiday memories, plus hosting advice for food and décor

BY BETTINA CHANG • CTW FEATURES

“A reveler is someone who loves sharing their passion for good times,” reads the first line of Ali Larter’s new book, “Kitchen Revelry” (St. Martin’s Press, 2013). Larter certainly does so through this collection of recipes, entertaining tips and personal anecdotes.

Larter is perhaps most well-known for her roles on NBC’s “Heroes” as sisters Niki Sanders and Tracy Strauss. This year, she is preparing to star alongside “Game of Thrones” actor Sean Bean in TNT’s “Legends,” a TV show created by Howard Gor-

don (“Homeland”).

For her, acting is “fun wearing different hats,” and she says she’s excited to work with Gordon who is known for “great, strong female characters.”

Between those long months on the set, though, she spends her time hosting parties for friends and family.

“I started traveling [as a model] when I was 18 years old,” she says. “Food was my way of connection and how I met new people when I was lonely. If I moved to a new city, it

was a way to bridge that gap.”

In “Kitchen Revelry,” Larter offers two menus per month for the calendar year, recognizing that “some months you want to throw fabulous dinner parties where you go all out, but other times you want to do turkey chili for a cozy night in.”

Staying relaxed and stress-free is her goal. “I want to inspire people to throw parties and not worry about the final product,” she says. “You don’t want to hide your mistakes in the kitchen. That’s part of the fun.”

Still, not all of us are as practiced

hostesses as Larter, who is now living in Los Angeles with her husband, actor Hayes MacArthur and son Theodore.

Here, she shares her holiday memories and tips for holiday revelry.

What is your favorite holiday recipe from this book?

The rustic sausage and fennel stuffing for Thanksgiving is one of my favorites. We do a “friends Thanksgiving,” which started because my in-laws were in town and I had to cook my first Thanksgiving. I was totally petrified because my mother-in-law is an incredible hostess. Her dinner parties are decked out to the nines.

I was so nervous, so I invited my friends over a week before and did a trial run of the entire evening – I cooked every recipe. And now it’s a tradition, one of the best meals of the year.

You feature a menu for a tree-trimming party in your book. Do you host many of those yourself?

We do it every year. I’ve done it with just chocolate and cheese, or with cocktails and easy appetizers. We leave a big pot of meatballs or a roast chicken on the cutting board so people can pick at it.

Just make sure you invite people who will actually trim the tree, instead of just chat!

What do you do to decorate the house around the holidays?

My favorite thing is to pick out an amazing tree. I buy a lot of extra pine needles, like the Douglas fir, and decorate all through my house with cut pieces. With that, I also love to use red berries.

I like having tons and tons of candles. Obviously, you have to be safe with them, but the more candles, the better. I put them all through the tables and mix them on platters where the food is. You can buy them in bulk and not spend as much money.

What were the holidays like for you growing up?

My mom always threw Christmas parties, and they were the best times of the year. Everyone came over from the neighborhood, especially your friends you haven't seen in a while.

I feel so lucky that my mom and dad made it a priority for our family to be together. That's why I have such a connection to throwing dinner parties. I think it's really important - to turn off that cell phone, get off that computer and be together.

What's your favorite Christmas decoration?

I'm a total nerd about it - I love Christmas. Me, my sister, my mom and grandma have been giving each other different kinds of Santas and snowmen. I have a snowman collection and families of them all over the house!

© CTW Features



ALI'S LAID-BACK PARTY TIPS

"I want my guests walking into a vibe that's not pristine and perfect, because otherwise people feel on edge," says actress Ali Larter. "It's like taking the pressure off. I'm telling you, messy is good!"

Here are some ways Larter creates a relaxed vibe at her parties:

- * For platters of food, don't carefully space things out. Larter "artfully groups" the crackers, cheeses and grapes so it looks more inviting
- * Light the candles before people arrive so the room has a settled-in feel
- * For informal gatherings, leave something simmering on the stove (Larter offers a ricotta meatball recipe) so people can pick at it
- * Strike a balance. In her book, Larter says a reveler is "one part Zen master, one part MacGyver, and two parts Rita Hayworth."

1/2 PAGE AD