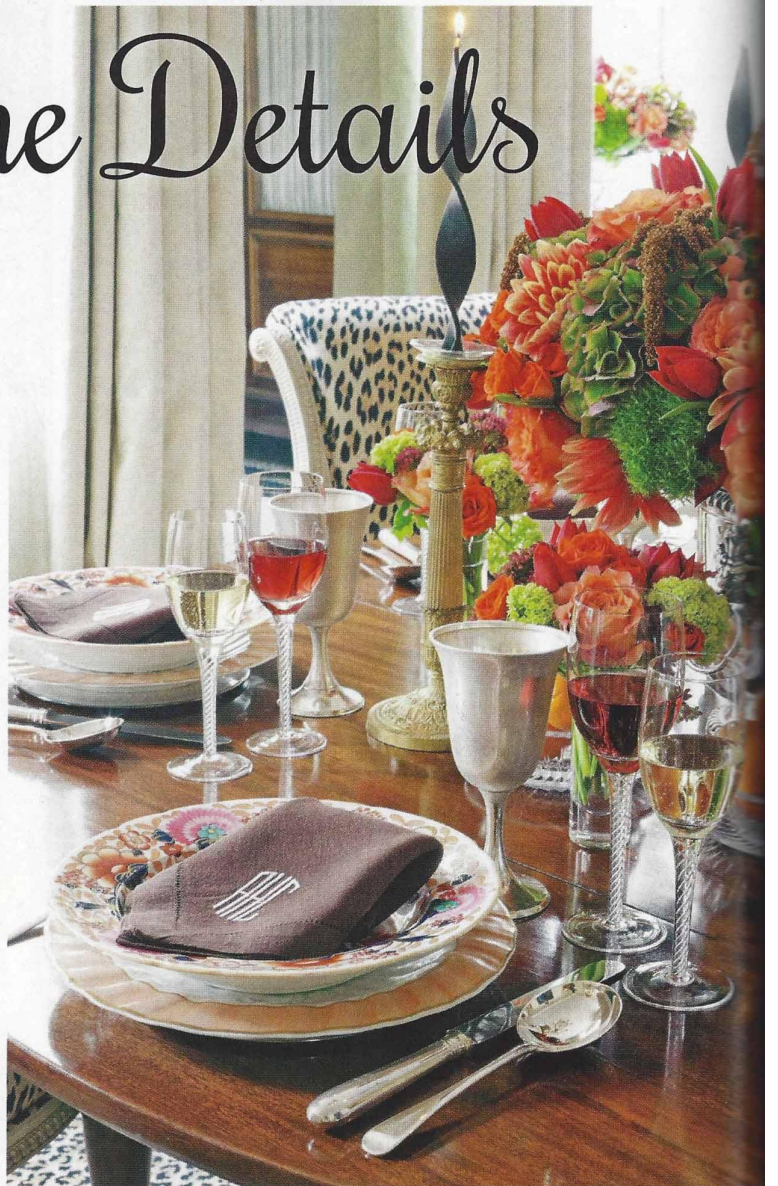
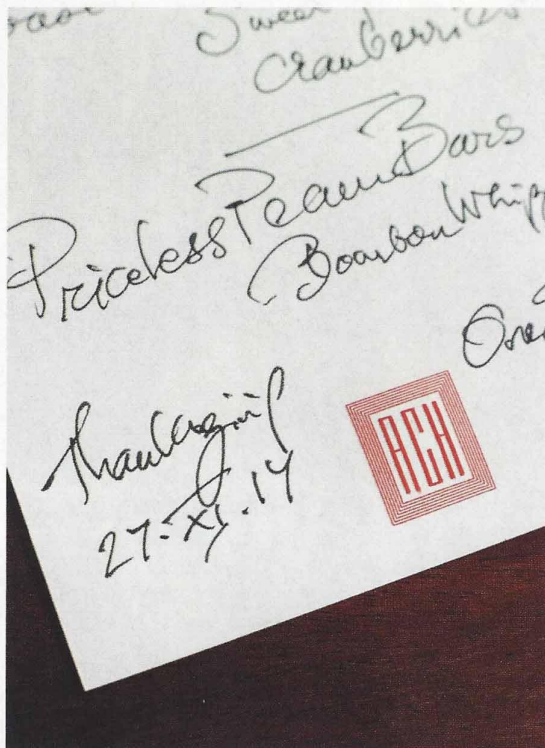


Hitz in the Details

Host with the most **Alex Hitz** sets the Thanksgiving table and shares his entertaining quips

by Haley Friedlich

photographed by Alexandra Rowley



Opposite page: Alex Hitz toasts with Mrs. Sherrill's crystal wineglass
Clockwise from left: Handwritten menu cards for each place setting; a close-up of a place setting at Hitz's Thanksgiving dinner party, using his family's silver, and his own napkins and china combined with Mrs. Sherrill's stemware and crystal finger bowls; detailed view of Mrs. Sherrill's gold vessel



Grooming by Heidi Evora-Santiago for Damali NYC

Wine courtesy of Clos du Bois

Rosé Champagne courtesy of Veuve Clicquot

Flower arrangements by Plaza Flowers®

For information on the apartment please contact:

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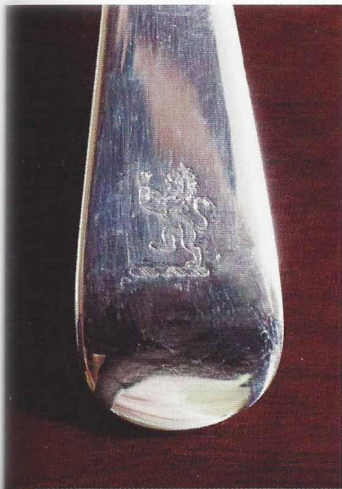
"Here's the formula, and I've said this again and again, turn the lights down, serve a really good chicken pot pie and plenty of excellent red wine, and how bad can it be? You know?"

To

o Alex Hitz, entertaining is an art form: a glorious culmination of thoughtful planning and meticulous preparation. His Southern manners and East Coast sensibility combine to produce abundant and aesthetically superior dinner parties. His flair for entertaining began with a love for cooking (which he inherited from his mother), but certainly did not end there: "There's an art to being a host that you don't necessarily have even if you're a wonderful cook," say Hitz. "Chances are, though, if you are a skilled cook, you want to share it with people. That's a leg up. To be a great cook, you care about the food. To be a great host, you care about the guests. Being a host is also about creating an experience. It's theatre and you're the star of your own show. Or the producer." Something he knows a bit about: Hitz tried on many hats before he settled into the chef/host groove. He was a restaurateur, Broadway producer, movie producer, TV producer, real estate developer and men's clothing designer, but after buying a house in L.A., he found his way back into the kitchen—and dining room—and has since settled there.

When Hitz joined forces with *AVENUE*, we were able to arrange a day in the 1 Sutton Place South duplex of decorating doyenne Betty Sherrill. Sherrill, who died in May, was a longtime president and chairwoman of McMillen Inc., and a legendary hostess. Her Christmas parties were particularly of note; she would line the spiral staircase with twinkling votives and welcome 300 of New York's most notable into her home. We were honored to get to set her fabulous, leopard-print dining room for a very special Thanksgiving dinner.





Alex Hitz on the perfect dinner party formula:

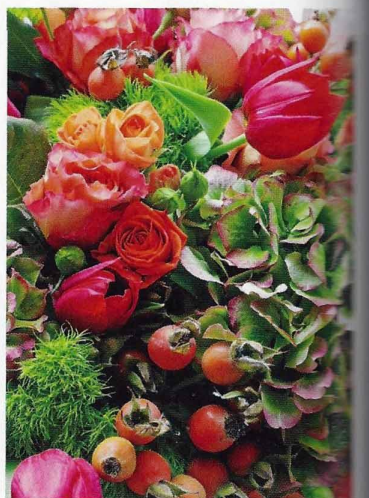
Here's the formula, and I've said this again and again, turn the lights down, serve a really good chicken pot pie and plenty of excellent red wine, and how bad can it be? You know?

On what he will not do for his guests, no matter how much he likes them:

I don't accommodate people's food issues. While I would never knowingly serve something to someone that they have trouble with, it's not a short-order kitchen and I don't go out of the way. It's my house and they're not coming to a restaurant. I just don't think it's anybody's trouble other than your own. And I really resent going to the best restaurants in the world and having the waiters come to the table now and ask, before they say hello, "OK, does anyone have any food allergies?" It's none of your goddamn business if I have any food allergies or not! And I do have food allergies!



This page, left: The room's other credenza is accented with a smaller, complimenting floral arrangement by Plaza flowers in Hitz's silver vessel. It sits atop *Sixty Years of Interior Design: The World of McMillen*—yet another nod to Mrs. Sherrill, and is rounded out on either side by more crystal finger bowls filled with clementines and between gold candelabras—both belonging to the Sherrill estate. Below, a detailed view of the floral arrangement. **Opposite page, right:** A head-on view of the table; Hitz pouring his butternut squash soup



On what he would never serve at a dinner party:

I would never serve anything that has to be done at the last minute. I would never serve anything that was a recipe that I hadn't tested 100 times. It's not the science fair and it's not a lab; my guests are not specimens on which to be tested. And no sautéing.

On entertaining in New York:

What's so wonderful about New York is that for the most part, people don't have apartments that are the size of big houses somewhere else. I mean, there are plenty of people who have grand, big apartments, and still even in those apartments the dining rooms seat a certain number. Whatever that number is, if the number is 12, if the number is 20, New Yorkers will put 18 and 30. They cram people in and it's great. It's always better to be too tight at a table, than to have too much space. I have to say I'm guilty of it. I put too many people at the table. It's more fun!

On sourcing NYC dinner party supplies:

My favorite food market in all of New York is Russ and Daughters, the caviar place down on East Houston Street. This is a magic place, something that every city should have. Sherry-Lehmann, the wines, the best bordeauxs in America. There's no selection that approaches it and it's been there since like 1934. I think Lobel's meats are impeccable. It's fun to go there. Take a mortgage on your house before you go. I love Fairway Market, that's such a fabulous concept. Fairway. The green market down at Union Square, all of those things that are like that. This city is a rich tapestry of really exciting things to buy and see when it comes to eating and drinking.



On his hosting icon:

It's impossible to talk about style and entertaining without mentioning Nan Kempner. She was a really wonderful friend of mine. Gave the best parties in the world, everybody came, and she had lunches and dinners three, four, five times a week. There was a Sunday night spaghetti dinner every week for everybody who was coming in from the country; wonderful lunches, and the most fabulous cook and butler—who were really like friends and family—Selena and Bernardo. And Tommy was so so generous. Nan, she just had it down. It was fun and relaxed, but the quality was impeccable, the guests were great, and she was so much fun. You can't mention the two words "style" and "entertaining," without saying "Nan."



Alex Hitz's Butternut Squash Soup Recipe

Ingredients:

1 1/2 pounds butternut squash
1 1/2 pounds Red Delicious apples
1 1/2 cups diced onions
2 1/2 cups chicken stock
2 teaspoons salt
1 tablespoon dried rosemary
1 tablespoon dried oregano
1 cup heavy cream

Directions:

■ Peel and chop the squash into approximately 1 1/2-inch cubes. Peel and core the apples, and chop them into pieces the same size as the squash.
■ In a medium-size stockpot over medium heat, combine the squash, apples, onions, chicken stock, salt, rosemary, and oregano. Bring them to a simmer and cook until the vegetables and apples are tender enough that you can pierce them with a fork, approximately 15 to 20 minutes.
■ Remove the stockpot from the heat and, in a food processor fitted with a metal blade, puree all the ingredients until they are smooth. You may need to do this in batches.
■ Pour the pureed vegetables into a medium mixing bowl and stir in the heavy cream. Cover and refrigerate it overnight. When it's time to serve, reheat the soup to a simmer, and serve it hot.

On his favorite Thanksgiving tradition:

Growing up in Atlanta, my mother's family would always descend upon us—and some strays and orphans too—and it was a big tradition. The food was always delicious. Now, I am not opposed to catering or dining out, especially with so many fabulous options in New York, you just have to make sure you create a sense of occasion no matter where or how you do it. And if you do [cater], make sure you make one thing, and that one thing is my butternut squash soup. It's easy, perfect, a standout, a star, and flawless every time. ♦