



# OCCASIONS TO CELEBRATE

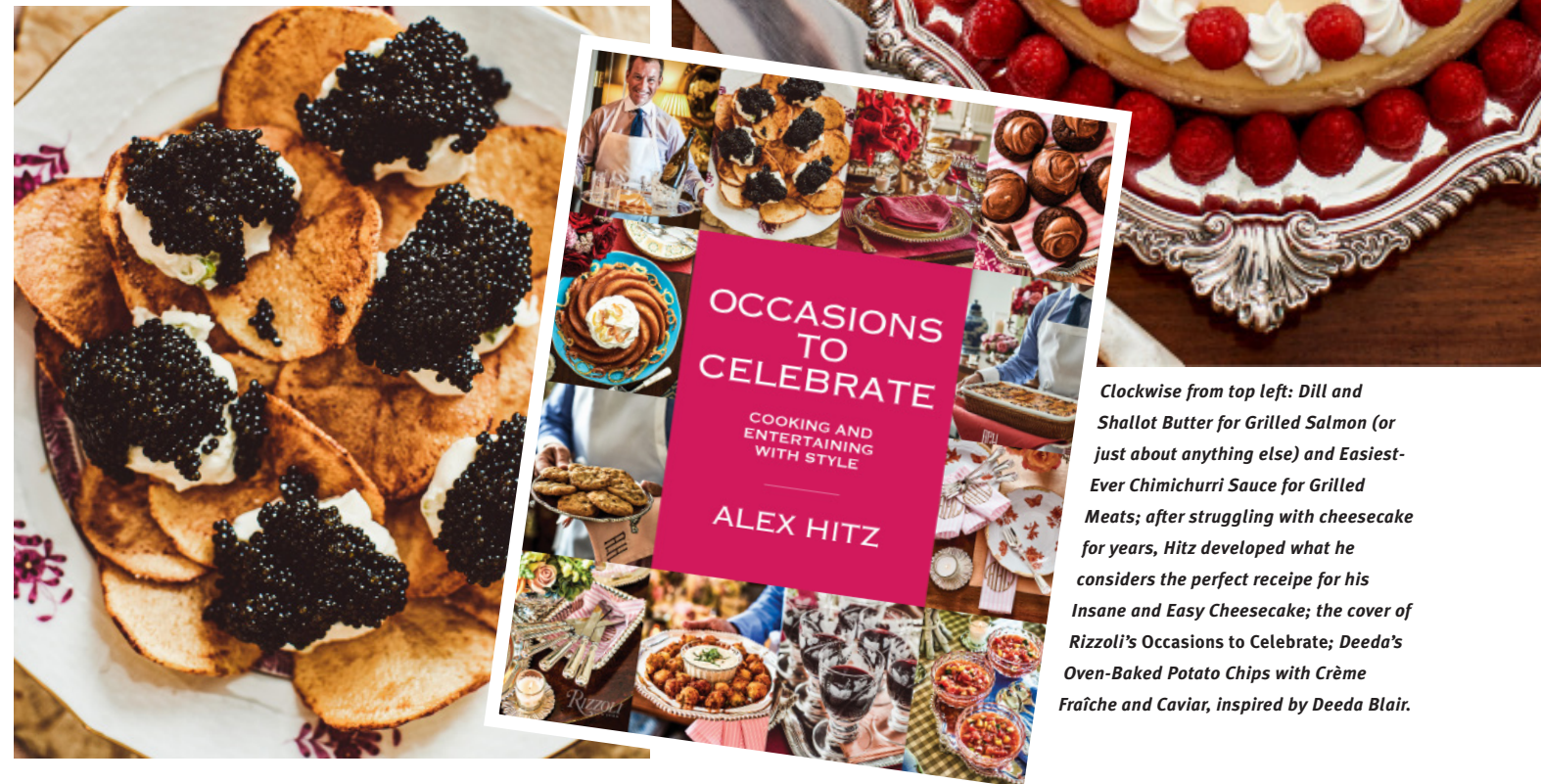


**ASSEMBLING THE** frontispiece and back pages for this book, *Occasions to Celebrate*, I looked through my own photos and, frankly, just could not believe what I saw. There have been so many good times, so many extraordinary people. I've had far more than my fair share of occasions to celebrate for more than half a century: seminal birthdays in New York, summer parties in Los Angeles, birthdays of my friends, honors, incredible trips all over the world. Special occasions. Ordinary occasions. A lifetime of celebration with people I love. Not a half-day goes by without my thinking of how grateful I am even when things aren't that great. Not to get too deep here—this is a cookbook, after all, not a self-help tome—but perspective is the key to all deeper understanding.

While I writing my last book, *The Art of the Host*, I went looking for a recipe Alice B. Toklas had given my mother in Paris in the 1950s. I uncovered more than 250 storage boxes of family archives, souvenirs, and photographs, many of which I'd never seen before. In many instances, I discovered my family in ways I did not have the opportunity to do while they were alive. To say they celebrated occasions is to say the Defenestrations of Prague were just another somebody opening the window.

Theirs were uncommon lives, well-lived: weddings, concerts, birthday parties, my stepfather's installation as a Kennedy Center Honoree, Thanksgivings,

*Liz's Pimiento Cheese plate, named after Liz Smith Robinson, a Baltimore hostess.*



*Clockwise from top left: Dill and Shallot Butter for Grilled Salmon (or just about anything else) and Easiest-Ever Chimichurri Sauce for Grilled Meats; after struggling with cheesecake for years, Hitz developed what he considers the perfect recipe for his Insane and Easy Cheesecake; the cover of Rizzoli's Occasions to Celebrate; Deeda's Oven-Baked Potato Chips with Crème Fraîche and Caviar, inspired by Deeda Blair.*

COURTESY OF RIZZOLI NEW YORK; IAIN BAGWELL

Christenings, black-tie evenings out on the town, exotic trips to exotic places on exotic-seeming ocean liners.

In each photo, the moment itself seemed truly dazzling. But I looked beyond the photos and imagined more—the excitement in preparing for these occasions, what to wear, planning the whole everything, and, finally, the “how” of getting it all together. I have always been fascinated by any behind-the-scenes process. Remember: everything must always look easy although it never, ever is...

Imagining those preparation days, the celebration

wasn't just the occasion itself. It was every second, minute, forethought devoted to planning and consideration. And all of a sudden, I looked at these things in a different way. I had an epiphany.

The message is clear. Celebrate every day. Don't just wait for a special occasion. Every day is filled with so many of those. And if this time, the COVID-19 era, hasn't taught us that, perhaps nothing will ever. Whether it's your birthday, a holiday, or just another Tuesday, make every day a special occasion: an occasion to celebrate. ♦