

Appys and Oscars

They don't need to be a massive undertaking: Oscar parties can be simple, fun, and quirky.

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Some people like to watch the Oscars with a bucket of ice cream and a fantastically worn-in pair of sweatpants.

But it seems an increasing number of people figure if the Hollywood glitterati are all gussed up, then it's time for a party.

That's what Vancouver food-aficionado and chef Lesley Stowe realized a few years ago, while running her store-front and catering business, Lesley Stowe Fine Foods: "People were coming in and saying, 'Oh my god, it's the Oscars. I should be doing something.'"

The Oscars present the perfect chance for a low-key, but playfully themed, soiree, says Stowe.

Just keep it simple.

"People are going to be perched around a TV, maybe standing as opposed to sitting at a table," Stowe says. "So serve truffle popcorn, spicy nuts and dip, crisps and anti-pasto. For the main course maybe a hot bowl of beef stew or a chicken pot pie – things that are easy."

To set the mood with easy decorations and props, Stowe suggests filling a bowl full of campy, dollar-store sunglasses for your guests to wear, filling film canisters with flowers, or strewing your coffee table with gold stars.

Stowe shares a few more tips for simple but impactful Oscar parties:

- The Oscars present an event that lasts an entire evening. Allow your guests to graze on nibbles and easy courses from the time the stars start their red carpet arrivals until they whisk away, awards in hand, to smoky after-parties.

- Keep the presentation elegant but simple. More is never better, whether it's food or decor or presentation. Chose four outstanding appetizers instead of eight mediocre ones.

- Bring your cheeses to room temperature for an hour. This allows them to soften, unlocking their flavour. Fruit such as pears, strawberries and grapes help add colourful accents to your cheese plates.

For more information about Lesley Stowe, her Raincoast Crisps brand or her cookbook, *The Lesley Stowe Fine Foods Cookbook* (HarperCollins, 2006), visit www.lesleystowe.com.

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chef and author of *The Lesley Stowe Fine Foods Cookbook*



KEEP IT SIMPLE - Chef and entrepreneur Lesley Stowe offers tips for your next Oscar party. Jonathon Cruz photo