

An Affair to Remember

A San Antonio couple host a stylish soirée with their nearest and dearest to celebrate the season and to bid farewell to their home and all its happy reminiscences

By ALICE WELSH DOYLE
Photography by PARISH PHOTOGRAPHY



CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: “Flowers are essential to every gathering,” says Alice Welder. • The hostess in her living room, which was transformed for the party • The stately façade with multiple wreaths and sparkling lights

CLARK AND ALICE WELDER had hosted numerous memorable parties in their beautifully appointed San Antonio home, but this one was memorable for a unique reason—it was the last one before the couple left the city for their next chapter in the Texas Hill Country. “I fancied a fabulous evening with all our closest friends and loved ones to celebrate the season and give our home a special farewell,” explains Alice. “I wanted a distinctive atmosphere with beautiful flowers, great food, music, gifts, and more.”

To help realize that dream, the Welders engaged event planning and design firm Cloche Designs to orchestrate the affair. For inspiration, Cloche’s Laura Nell Burton and partner Christin Gish had only to look in Alice’s china closet, honing in on the pheasant-adorned pattern of Olde Avesbury by Royal Crown Derby. “The party was designed around

CLOCKWISE FROM BELOW: Beloved china, monogrammed napkins, and gold flatware ready for the elegant dinner • Seating cards embellished with velvet ribbon, silver antler keepsakes, and feathers • Trays with a shimmering selection of goblets and glasses for after-dinner Brandy Freezes, a tradition of The Argyle • Seating in the rotunda allowed space for a soaring arrangement with a mix of blossoms by Botanical No. 9.



“So many memories were made in our San Antonio home with friends and family. It was such a joy to share this magical night with them, and now we have a very special memory to last a lifetime.” —ALICE WELDER



that china, which Alice’s mother and father had purchased in London before she was born,” says Burton. “Starting with the invitation, the pheasant was central to our design, and the colors from the china were carried across the decor in a way that complemented the existing interiors of the home.”

The palette consisted primarily of hunter green and raspberry pink along with gold and white. A lively peacock blue joined in to festoon the abundant wreaths, trees, and garlands in velvet ribbon. Arriving guests walked up to strings of sparkling lights dripping from the trees while a mariachi band serenaded.

“We wanted guests to feel the excitement from the first moment,” says Burton. “The music continued with a piano player inside, and we also set up a backyard tent and lounge area for cocktails and hors d’oeuvres and after-dinner gathering.”

Guests sipped on rosé champagne and enjoyed oysters on the half shell among other delectable fare before coming inside to dine. Green satiny fabric dressed the dining tables, which sparkled



CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: Alice presents her guests with Christmas gifts. • A sketch artist was part of the after-dinner entertainment. • The outdoor lounge area included a tent and fire pit. • A mariachi band played during cocktail hour.

with Olde Avesbury china, gold flatware, and luxuriant arrangements of cymbidium orchids, garden roses, hydrangeas, and greenery. “The furniture was moved out, which allowed us to seat guests in nooks and crannies, like the rotunda, that were out of the ordinary,” says Burton. For the menu, the planners looked to The Argyle, a historic private club in San Antonio acclaimed for its cuisine. The evening included lobster bisque ladled tableside from an Olde Avesbury tureen, limoncello sorbet, beef Bourguignonne, and the Welders’ particular favorite, quail stuffed with three-cheese grits. The finale, a flaming Neapolitan baked Alaska, was rolled in on a cart and cut tableside.

As the meal wrapped up, Santa Claus arrived delivering beautifully wrapped gifts of Radko ornaments for each guest. Afterward, the party moved back outside, where a fire pit glowed and plush sofas beckoned for continued conversation. “After our dinner parties, we love for the magic to continue later into the evening with more merriment and always an element of surprise,” says Alice. For this event, a cigar roller and sketch artist kept the partygoers engaged and lingering. Finally, with embracing goodbyes, guests left with great cheer, gifts in hand, and more memories to savor. ❄️

