

CHRISTMAS GREETINGS  
**SAVORIES**

Mom's Mushroom Turnovers

Mrs. Beebe's Crab Dip

Chicken Liver Terrine

Mrs. Erda's Artichoke Spread

Gougere  
with

Smoked Salmon & Caviar

Stuffed Endive Spears

Bacon-Wrapped Dates  
Homemade Herb Biscuits  
with

Chutney Trio & Assorted  
Olive "Wreath"



*Good Cheer*



Light streamed through the windows of Julia Usher and Dr. Bryan Meyers' Webster Groves home, its wide porch beckoning unto guests' chilly feet. A fully bedecked Christmas tree glowed at the door, ornaments swaying with the occasional gust. Standing in the foyer, Ms. Usher invited in a group of new arrivals, smiling widely, and took their coats.

"Hey, Merry Christmas! Hiiii! Hey, you look gorgeous!" she cried, greeting each in turn. Before long, more than two dozen neighbors, friends, colleagues, and family members were mingling in the kitchen, laughing together at shared stories and jokes, sampling delectables and wines, and rapidly getting to know one another. Dr. Meyers' medical colleagues (he's chief of thoracic surgery at Barnes-Jewish Hospital) and Ms. Usher's baking and food writing friends (she's a food writer and stylist) had little trouble finding common ground. Even newcomers to the couple's circle were quickly drawn into conversation—much of it concerning Ms. Usher's attractive home and delicious desserts.

Guests repeatedly returned to the room between the foyer and the kitchen to sample sweets from golden trays, clustered amid antique lace and golden boughs on the dessert table. The hostess, who was once a mechanical engineer, honed the

recipes for these delicacies—many of which appear in her new book, *Cookie Swap*, which hit No. 2 on Amazon.com this summer—through diligent testing at numerous cookie-swap events and years of work at her former bakery, AzucArte (a combination of the Spanish words for sugar, *azúcar*, and art, *arte*).

"Doesn't everything look good?" murmured Ms. Usher's mother, Carol. Like the desserts, the savory treats on hand had been a long time in development, based on heirloom recipes passed down the Usher family tree. Those curious could browse a set of Season's Greetings recipe cards in a little red box on the counter. A tray of homemade salsa and apple butter, canned just a few months earlier, reflected Dr. Meyers' green thumb. Guests testified that during the warm months, his garden's bounty is enviable.

The couple's home is a study in creative reuse, exemplifying a hardy New England frugality, with distressed cabinetry and pendant lamps made from retrofitted, industrial-size whisks. On this particular evening, vintage ornaments, costume jewelry, books, and postcards peeked out of every corner, amid shining candles and winter greenery. Candies could be found nestled into a World War II-era Shiny-Brite ornament box, and even the basket bearing guests' wrapped gifts—an antique shopping cart, the metal dark with age—had been



Details

**HOSTS**  
Julia Usher and her husband, Dr. Bryan Meyers

**LOCATION**  
The couple's home, Webster Groves

**GUESTS**  
Carol Usher; Barb and Steve Adams; Shawn and Mike Blaes; Felicia and Dr. Traves Crabtree and their children, Ellie, Abby, and Jakob; Dr. Gokhan Ergene; Dr. Xiang-Yan Liu; Helen and Mike Fletcher; Frances and Dr. Bill Gay; Dr. Lauren

and Mica Hill; Drs. Friederike and Dan Kreisel and their children, Sarah and Stella; Shauna and Dr. Sasha Krupnick; Ann Huston; Dr. Charles Roper; and Jane and Richard Winter