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Tao of Entertaining

Thomas Schoos, the L.A. designer known for his Asian-inspired aesthetic, invites friends to dinner in his garden.

BY PAULINE O'CONNOR

RECIPES BY E. MICHAEL REIDT

features

MAY 2007

Jean-Georges's Bora Bora

200 Star chef Jean-Georges Vongerichten follows a morning of Jet-skiing on Bora Bora's turquoise waters with an exuberant afternoon of creating recipes for his new restaurant, Lagoon.

BY TOM GILLING

Chicken: A Cook's Guide to the World's Favorite Bird

208 From Peruvian rotisserie to Jamaican jerk, there are a lot of ways to cook a chicken. Inspired, the F&W Test Kitchen uses rubs, marinades and stir-fries to bring a world of flavor to our favorite bird.

The World's Greatest Wine City

216 New York City is the capital of many things: finance, art, fashion—and wine. Writer **Ben Cheever** tastes his way down Broadway while **Peter Hellman** reports on the city's best shops and restaurant wine lists.

On the Cover Bacon-wrapped shrimp with passion fruit mustard. From "Jean-Georges's Bora Bora," p. 235.

PHOTOGRAPH BY TINA RUPP FOOD STYLING BY ALISON ATTENBOROUGH PROP STYLING BY ALISTAIR TURNBULL

TAO OF ENTERTAINING

THOMAS SCHOOS, THE L.A. RESTAURANT AND HOTEL DESIGNER KNOWN FOR HIS THEATRICAL, ASIAN-INSPIRED AESTHETIC, INVITES FRIENDS TO HIS GARDEN (COMPLETE WITH GIANT STONE BUDDHA) FOR DINNER.

BY PAULINE O'CONNOR RECIPES BY E. MICHAEL REIDT PHOTOGRAPHS BY VICTORIA PEARSON



Rum-spiked hurricanes add to the tropical feeling of Thomas Schoos's garden, OPPOSITE, which features a Buddha like one at Tao, a Manhattan restaurant he designed.

THIS PERFECT PARTY SETTING COMBINES INDIAN ANTIQUES WITH PALMETTO TREES AND MACAWS.



FOR HOTEL AND RESTAURANT DESIGNER THOMAS Schoos, the mastermind behind such hot Los Angeles-area restaurants as Wilshire, Koi and O-Bar, delicious food is just one aspect of a great party. "You need all five senses going nuts on you," Schoos explains at a dinner he's hosting in the lush garden behind the offices of Thomas Schoos Design in West Hollywood, where he does most of his entertaining. Like many of his projects, the garden includes elements from around the world, with art and antiques from India and Africa, a koi pond and a half-dozen parrots and hyacinth macaws. All manner of flora from palmetto trees to yuccas grow there; rare staghorn ferns are whimsically mounted on boards, like hunting trophies, that hang from the aviary's walls. "I feel like I'm on *Gilligan's Island*," one guest comments. *Gilligan's Island* with a flat-screen TV and full outdoor kitchen, that is.

Born and raised in Germany, the 39-year-old Schoos felt drawn to Southern California. "I was a palm tree in a cold climate," he claims. So about 12 years ago, he decided to

Pauline O'Connor, a Los Angeles-based writer, has contributed to the New York Times, Elle and the New York Observer.

FOOD STYLIST: ROBI TRONARD; PROP STYLIST: JOE MAYER



The garden party begins with a delicious scallop seiche, which is traditionally served in Ecuador with a bowl of popcorn. OPPOSITE: Schoos with his hyacinth macaws, which live in an aviary in the garden.



GARDEN PARTY MENU

O-HURRICANE COCKTAILS
GRILLED-LIME CAIPIRINHAS
SMOKED CHICKEN PIZZA

BLOOD ORANGE-SCALLOP SEVICHE
2006 LOS VASCOS SAUVIGNON BLANC

HANGER STEAK WITH CHIMICHURRI
GRILLED ROMAINE SALAD

2005 HACIENDA ARAUCANO CABERNET SAUVIGNON
EASY VANILLA BEAN PANNA COTTA

plant himself amid L.A.'s iconic palms and pursue a career as a painter. But it wasn't until a con artist absconded with all his savings that Schoos's career got a real boost. Broke and behind on rent, he set up shop on a Studio City sidewalk and began painting. By the end of that first day, he'd made \$6,000. Eventually, he attracted the attention of an art lover who loaned him \$20,000 to open his own studio on Melrose Avenue. One fateful day in 1998, actress Jada Pinkett Smith wandered in. The two hit it off, and before long, Schoos was hired to decorate Pinkett Smith's home. A few years later, another customer asked him to design a restaurant on the site of a former movie theater in New York City: Tao, a multilevel, 12,000-square-foot space featuring a 16-foot-tall Buddha, a reflecting pool and rows of bamboo. Schoos's reputation has grown with each subsequent project, thanks to his trademark sexy lighting, inventive merging of indoor and outdoor space, and use of such luxe elements as mohair wall coverings and shagreen tabletops.

Tonight, Schoos is celebrating the opening of one of his latest projects, the Penthouse restaurant at the Huntley Hotel in Santa Monica, with seven friends, including Michael Berman, his business partner. While Schoos makes a pitcher of caipirinhas, E. Michael Reidt—an F&W Best New Chef 2001 and the chef at the Penthouse—prepares dinner and puts finishing touches on the cocktails, including lime wheels caramelized on the grill. Sipping the smoky, sweet-tart concoction, Reidt says, "I've done a lot of late-night caramelizing experiments—the last one was with cauliflower. It works a lot better with limes."

Schoos is accustomed to working alongside chefs. He cooks often with Masaharu Morimoto, whose new restaurants Schoos is designing. And

he's collaborating on a style and entertaining book with chef Govind Armstrong of L.A.'s Table 8, a restaurant Schoos recently redesigned. Tonight, however, he leaves the cooking to Reidt. Along with cocktails—the grilled-lime caipirinhas and hurricanes spiked with rum and berry schnapps—the guests enjoy crisp flat-bread pizzas topped with smoked chicken and goat cheese. Then the group sits down to scallop seiche marinated in citrus, chile sauce and coconut milk. Afterward, they move on to



"It's an interpretation of surf and turf," says Schoos about pairing a seiche appetizer and a hanger steak main course, served on "Ombrages" plates from Raynard (also seen on opposite page with "Triad" flatware from Dansk). OPPOSITE: Schoos helps chef E. Michael Reidt at the fire.



grilled hanger steak served with a bacon-studded chimichurri sauce and a salad of grilled romaine leaves topped with roasted garlic-butter-milk dressing and shaved Manchego cheese. "It's an interpretation of surf and turf," Schoos explains about the seiche and steak.

Although his garden sprawls out over 6,000 square feet, it feels intimate, thanks to its many cozy nooks and fabric-draped cabanas. "I'm not really into huge spaces," Schoos explains. "I like to design them; I don't like to be in them." In a secluded area on the garden's edge, near a carved-stone Buddha almost as big as a Mini Cooper, is the dinner table, which Schoos made a few years ago: a 10-by-4-foot glass slab resting on a pair of massive, hand-carved stones. Its centerpiece is a large wooden flower boat filled with white and chartreuse cymbidium orchids and cut moss.

After dinner, the designer brings out his prized hyacinth macaws, Molly and Rio, who sit on his shoulders and nuzzle him affectionately. Conversation flits from the hallucinogenic properties of the garden's datura tree and the advantages of living in California versus New York to the Fibonacci sequence, a series of numbers that is found in nature, such as the spirals seen in the shapes of seashells and pinecones.

As the evening draws to a close, guests reminisce about the last dinner party Schoos hosted. "We were engrossed in a discussion about names for our new baby, and then we smelled something burning," recalls Joelle Warren-Lane, a teacher and executive at a nonprofit organization. That something turned out to be a guest's sweatshirt, which had caught fire from a candle. "After the flames were put out and we knew our singed friend hadn't been harmed, Thomas remarked that the burn-distressed look of his hoodie was kind of chic." Laughing, Schoos says, "To me, perfect is boring—it's the imperfections that make something beautiful."

O-Hurricane Cocktail

MAKES 1 DRINK

This classic New Orleans party drink is traditionally made with rum and passion fruit syrup and served in glasses shaped like hurricane lamps. James Matusky, the bar manager at West Hollywood's O-Bar, designed by Thomas Schoos, offers his interpretation: a sweet blend of fruit juices amped up with two kinds of rum.

Ice

- 3 ounces white rum
- ½ ounce DeKuyper Pucker Berry Fusion schnapps
- 1 ounce grenadine
- 1½ ounces lemon-lime soda
- ½ ounce pineapple juice
- ½ ounce orange juice
- ½ ounce Rose's lime juice
- ½ ounce Bacardi 151 rum
- 1 orange wedge
- 1 lime wedge

Fill a cocktail shaker with ice. Add the white rum, schnapps, grenadine, soda and fruit juices, and shake well. Strain into a hurricane glass or large wine glass over ice and top with the Bacardi 151. Garnish with the orange and lime wedges.

Grilled-Lime Caipirinhas

MAKES 1 DRINK

E. Michael Reidt used grilled limes only to garnish fish before he realized they'd also be amazing in a caipirinha, Brazil's national cocktail. "They add a slight smokiness to the drink," he says. "We've also muddled in sliced jalapeño, and that was awesome."

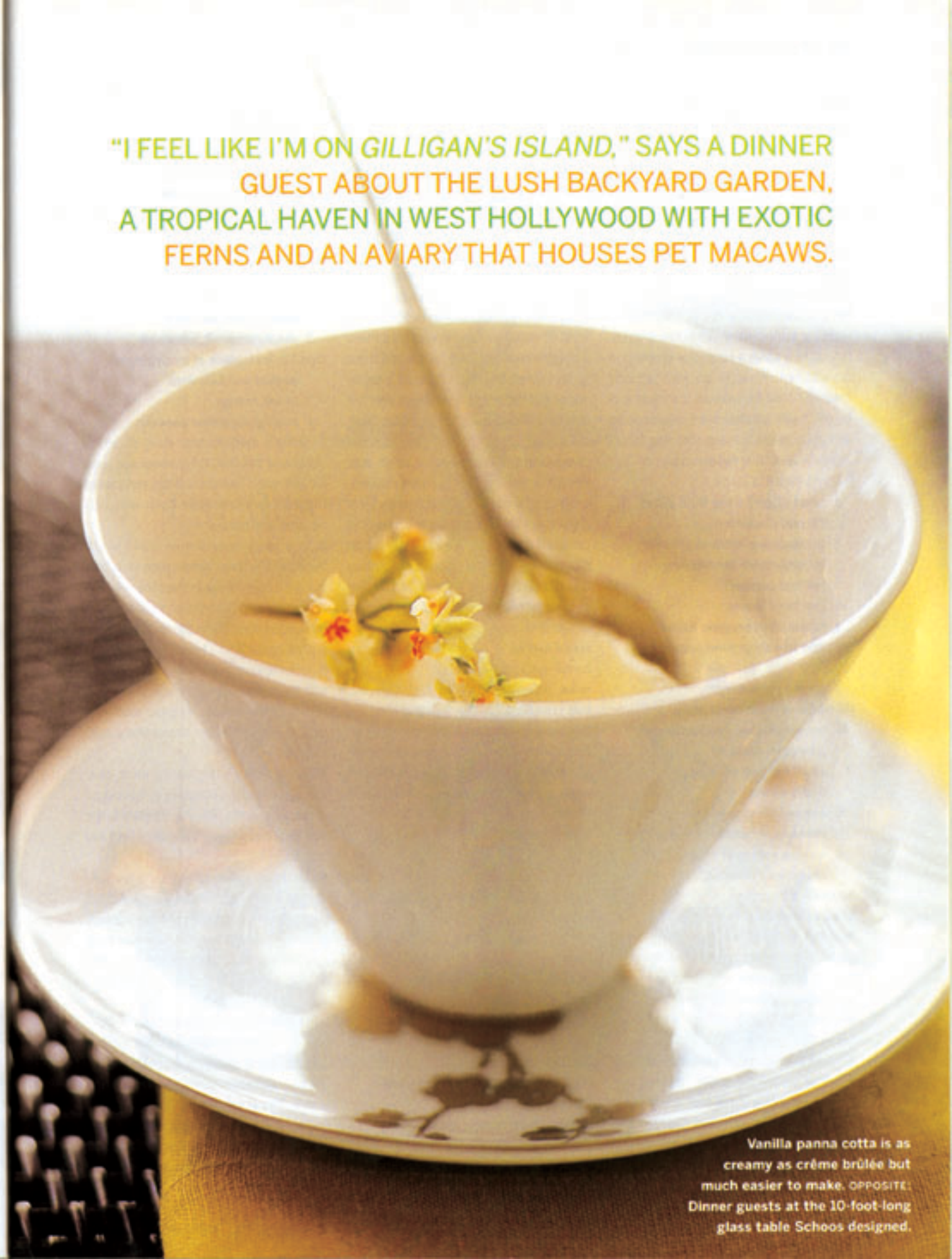
- 1 lime
- 2 tablespoons superfine sugar, plus more for dusting

Ice cubes

- 3 ounces cachaça
 - ½ ounce lemon-lime soda (optional)
1. Light a grill or preheat a grill pan. Trim the ends off the lime and slice the lime crosswise ¼ inch thick. Dust both sides of the lime wheels with sugar and grill over high heat, turning once, until lightly caramelized, about 20 seconds per side.

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"I FEEL LIKE I'M ON GILLIGAN'S ISLAND," SAYS A DINNER GUEST ABOUT THE LUSH BACKYARD GARDEN, A TROPICAL HAVEN IN WEST HOLLYWOOD WITH EXOTIC FERNS AND AN AVIARY THAT HOUSES PET MACAWS.



Vanilla panna cotta is as creamy as crème brûlée but much easier to make. OPPOSITE: Dinner guests at the 10-foot-long glass table Schoos designed.