

This holiday season, enviro-friendly can also mean elegant,
Dorothy Bartoszewski writes

Green party



In this eco-conscious age of ours, planning the perfect party is harder than ever, as you're now supposed to host swingin' shindigs while shrinking their (and your) environmental footprint.

Luckily, green these days can also be glam, especially if you avail yourself of the growing legion of stylish, eco-minded party services, from stationers and florists to caterers and vintners.

"Sustainable doesn't have to mean either less style or more work," says Emily Murgatroyd, a leading eco-event planner and owner of Vancouver's Greenprint Events. "It just means making smarter choices."

Among these choices are buying locally, using organic products where possible and cutting down on energy waste.

More specifically, the options encompass everything from alluring all-Canadian centerpieces to festive favours that keep on giving.

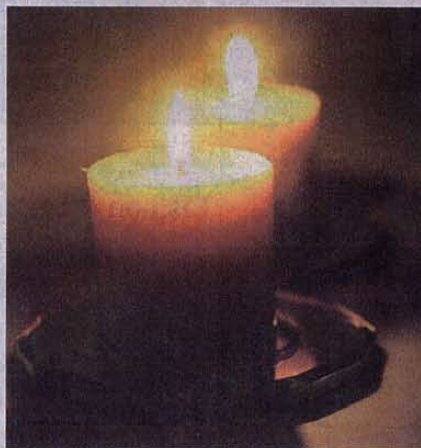
Following are five effective and hassle-free ideas for turning your next get-together into a chic eco-fete.

GOOD ON PAPER

When planning your party, scrap the standard paper invitations and assemble merry-makers electronically with programs such as evite.com, which can even enable easy and convivial - carpooling. If you've got to have hard copy, Winnipeg-based Botanical PaperWorks (www.botanicalpaperworks.com) makes cute "plantable" invites, cards and gift tags for all sorts of occasions, from birthdays to bar mitzvahs. Among the company's Christmas offerings are gingerbread-men favours embedded with spruce seeds, which guests can take home and plant wherever they like.

TAKE A BOUGH

Decking the halls with boughs



Handmade beeswax candles by the Golden Candlestick Company, \$10 each at Ten Thousand Villages (www.tenthousandvillages.ca).



Organic vegetable maki from Vert Catering (www.vertcatering.com).

of holly isn't just festive; it's also eco-friendly. Since most commercial flowers are flown in from abroad and drenched in pesticides, sprucing up your soiree with a sophisticated arrangement of local evergreen boughs, branches, berries and other fruit offers colour, elegance and built-in aromatherapy, as well as fulfilling that feel-good factor. Compost it all afterward for extra eco-points.

BRIGHT LIGHTS

To cut down on energy waste, trade in those old strings of conventional lights for highly efficient LED sets, which use 90 per cent less electricity and last at least seven times as long. Candles, meanwhile,

To please party palates and still be green, make dishes that are heavy on local and/or organic ingredients, poaching sublime recipes from the menus of regionally devoted restaurants such as British Columbia's Raincity Grill (www.raincitygrill.com) or Southern Ontario's Harvest (www.harvestrestaurant.ca). If you don't cook, turn to caterers such as Toronto's Vert Catering or Montreal's Crudessence, which will serve up delicious, seasonally appropriate tributes to your particular bioregion.

INTO THE DRINK

There's no shortage of top-drawer wineries and micro-breweries across this country,

Top left: Centrepiece with locally sourced cedar, silver fir, red dogwood, Honeycrisp apples, flex berries and rosemary, \$155 (including bowl) at Florigens Design in Toronto (www.florigensdesign.com).

Top right: 2006 Icewine Red, \$39 at Stratus Wines, the world's first LEED-certified winery, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont. (www.stratuswines.com).

Below: Plantable cotton-fibre gingerbread-men favours embedded with white-spruce seeds, \$1.65 each through Botanical Paperworks (www.botanicalpaperworks.com).

PHOTOS BY JIM ROSS FOR THE GLOBE AND MAIL



Plant this in celebration of the season



We wish you a green holiday season!
 Botanical PaperWorks Inc.

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provide instant ambience, but standard paraffin candles, especially scented ones, can contribute "significantly" to indoor air pollution, according to the Asthma Society of Canada. It suggests using unscented soy or beeswax candles instead.

LOCAL FLAVOUR

Both food fanatics and eco-freaks agree: Regional cuisine rocks.

so toast the season with stellar wines, beers and ciders from your neck of the woods, throwing in fruit juices and non-alcoholic ciders from area orchards for the teetallers and designated drivers among your guests. See www.canadianwinetrail.com for award-winning Canuck vintages and www.ratebeer.com for the best local brews.

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