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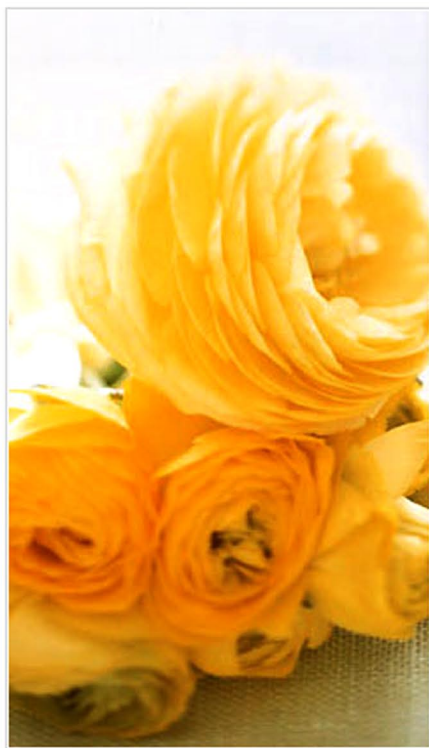
Mother's Day with Katy Sparks

The chef and her son, Luke, host a brunch for friends
by Clare O'Shea

Do you banish your mother from the kitchen on Mother's Day? Well-meaning kids serve their mothers eggs Benedict in bed or take them out to an elegant dinner—a great way to give Mom a break. But not every mom wants that kind of break: For professional chef (and mother) Katy Sparks, it is at the stove that she feels most herself—and most celebratory. Even on Mother's Day, there's no place like home.

"Cooking is my centering thing," Sparks says. "When I come home and get my hands on food, I think, Oh, this makes sense to me, this is what I do, this is why I love my work." That's one of the reasons Sparks likes to entertain: It's all about cooking and sharing. She sees Mother's Day as the perfect time to entertain—her son, his friends, and their families.

We think it's a perfect time to entertain, too, so have asked Sparks to share some brunch recipes with us from her cookbook, *Sparks in the Kitchen*, along with tabletop looks and more ideas on how to throw a great party and still enjoy yourself.



Hosting a party means honoring your guests," Sparks says. "They feel honored when you make an effort and bring out the good china." Any party with kids is by definition casual, but even small touches like cloth napkins can go a long way to make this a special occasion.

Tulips and daffodils are Sparks's favorite flowers for a springtime party. Her family's collection of starfish and shells makes a great centerpiece, and she always includes candles of various shapes and sizes as well.

Like most New Yorkers, Sparks knows how to make the most of limited space. She pushes her dining room table to the wall and uses it as a buffet. Guests can serve themselves and their kids and have more room to mingle. "Parties in my house tend to have people perched on chairs," she says.

Younger kids are happiest eating together on the floor—but even when her son is sitting on a rug with a paper plate in his lap, Sparks insists that he have good manners. "You can dine with anyone, from kings and presidents on down, and always feel comfortable if you have good table manners," she says. "Luke is getting there, but we need to remind him how to use both fork and knife, not fork and hand."