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And so, in the infamous words of Bugs Bunny, "Overture, curtains, lights. This is it, the night of nights... On with the show this is it." It's the eighty-third night at the Oscars! It's time to pull that tux out of mothballs, buy a fancy new gown and rent a limo. Or maybe not. Okay, so you don't have a ticket to Sunday night's star-studded, paparazzi-fueled frenzy. Neither do I. But heck, there's always next year.

In the meantime, why not throw your own Oscar Night Bash. Invite friends in to watch the show (or at least have it on mute in the corner). You don't need a celebrity chef to make your party special but it can't hurt to take a few hints from Wolfgang Puck. This year makes seventeen Oscar parties for Chef Puck. His menu includes smoked salmon, caviar, paella, lemon cheese cake and gold-dusted chocolate Oscars.

And for entertainment? Well if the show starts to drag and the conversation lulls, it doesn't hurt to have a few bits and pieces of trivia up your sleeve to amaze your friends. For instance:

The first Academy Awards were given in 1929. Best picture honors went to *Wings*, a World War I love story. Emil Jannings was awarded Best Actor. Janet Gaynor was honored for her starring role as a street walker in *Street Angel*. She was the first of twenty-five women to be nominated for playing a floozy.

This year, *The King's Speech* holds the lead with twelve nominations. With fourteen each, the two most nominated films of all time are *All about Eve* and *Titanic*. *Titanic* ties *Ben-Hur* for the most wins, eleven each.

Katharine Hepburn is the winningest actor or actress ever. She brought home the statue four times out of twelve nominations. Jack Nicholson follows with three wins and twelve nominations. Meryl Streep holds the lead in nominations with sixteen (and two wins).

All of which seem a pittance compared to Walt Disney's record fifty-nine nominations, twenty-two wins and three honorary awards.

Only three films that have earned Oscar's top five awards: Best Picture, Director, Actor, Actress and Writing. The big winners? *It Happened One Night*, *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

The youngest Best Actor winner is Adrien Brody. He was a few weeks short of his thirtieth birthday when he won for *The Pianist*. Marlee Matlin was twenty-one when she won Best Actress for *Children of a Lesser God*. She is also the only deaf person to win an Oscar.

Henry Fonda had the longest wait between nominations. He was nominated for *The Grapes of Wrath* in 1940. Forty-one years later he was nominated and won, playing Norman Thayer Jr. in *On Golden Pond*. Just a few months shy of his seventy-seventh birthday; he is the oldest winning actor. Jessica Tandy won a Tony in 1947 but didn't win an Oscar until 1989 for *Driving Miss Daisy*. She was eighty.

Vito Corleone won twice. In *The Godfather*, he was played by Marlon Brando who won Best Actor. Robert De Niro played the Don in *The Godfather Part II* and again won, this time for Best Supporting Actor.

And finally, what about those favorite, classic films that coulda, shoulda, woulda, musta won? The list of non-winners includes *Citizen Kane*, *The Wizard of Oz* and *E.T.: The Extra-terrestrial*. At least they were nominated. The charming and funny *Some Like It Hot* and the Marx Brothers' hilarious *Duck Soup* as well as Hitchcock's famous classics *Psycho* and *Vertigo* weren't even nominated.

Enjoy the show and ... Th-Th-Th-Th-Th- ... That's all, folks.

Bon appétit!

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Lemon Cheesecake

Always bake the cheesecake at least one day ahead so that it has time to rest and chill. Enjoy!

Serves 12-16

Crust

2 cups ground gingersnap cookies
6 tablespoons (3/4 stick) butter, melted

Filling

4 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese, room temperature
1 1/2 cups sugar
1 teaspoon ground ginger
1/2 teaspoon ground cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon salt
6 large eggs
2 1/2 cups sour cream
Finely grated peel of 2 lemons
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
Garnish: strawberries, raspberries or blueberries or a mixture of all 3

Preheat the oven to 350 degrees. Stir the cookie crumbs and butter together in medium bowl until the crumbs are evenly moistened. Press the crumbs into the bottom of a 10-inch springform pan with 3-inch sides. Bake the crust for 10-12 minutes. Cool completely.

Stack 2 large sheets of heavy-duty aluminum foil and place the springform pan in the center. Gather the foil snugly around bottom and sides of the pan.

Reduce the oven temperature to 325 degrees.

Using an electric mixer beat the cream cheese in a large bowl until fluffy. Gradually beat in the sugar, ginger, cinnamon and salt. Beat in the eggs, 1 at a time. Beat in sour cream, grated lemon peel and lemon juice. Pour the filling into the springform pan.

Place the springform pan in a large roasting pan. Pour enough hot water into the roasting pan to come about halfway up sides of the springform pan. Bake the cheesecake until the filling is slightly puffed and still moves a little when the pan is shaken gently, about 1 hour and 25 minutes.

Remove the cheesecake from the water bath and discard the foil. Put the cheesecake on a rack to cool for about 2 hours. Transfer the cheesecake to the refrigerator and chill uncovered until cold. Cover and keep chilled for at least 1 day and up to 2 days.

To serve: with a thin knife, carefully cut around the sides of the pan. Release the sides of the pan. Cut the cheesecake into wedges and serve with fresh fruit.