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## How the Salonnière List of the Best Party Hosts in America Is Put Together

The who's who of shindig-throwers in 2019 is out.

BY STEVEN STOLMAN - MAR 21, 2019



W hen Carla McDonald, a seasoned public relations exec, traded New York for Austin, TX in order to marry her husband Jack and start a family, she thought that keeping her hand in the marketing game would be a good thing, and initially it was. She aligned with a tech startup, and when it was sold, she leveraged that experience and her significant contacts into her own boutique PR firm, Dynabrand, growing it into one of the top firms in the state. But as the PR industry changed dramatically to feed the beast of the 24/7 news cycle, her passion for the art of buzz waned. "I just wasn't enjoying it as much," she said. "I wanted to start something new."



Salonnière's founder Carla McDonald. COURTESY OF SALONNIÈRE

An accomplished host and enthusiastic guest herself, she envisioned an online magazine that would celebrate the art of gracious hospitality. She named it *The Salonniere* after the women of 17th and 18th century France whose influential parties, or *salons*, shaped the world in a way that is still felt today. The website, launched in 2012, remains a fizzy romp through various events and personalities, accented with bits of party lore and retro images. And then there's "The List."

"It was a perfectly lovely party, if you've never been to a party before." –Truman Capote TOWN & COUNTRY MAGAZINE

Like other lists in our "who's in/who's out" obsessed society, the list's publication is a newsworthy event in of itself, as evidenced by the significant amount of media coverage it receives. And while lists of names are always an appetizing read for some, a bit of deeper diving revealed some interesting aspects of today's social landscape.

- The South rules: 46 percent of the honorees are from the South; 26 percent are from the West; 25 percent are from the Northeast; and three percent are from the Midwest.
- 2. Two and a half times as many women are on the list as men.
- 3. Intimate dinner parties are replacing over-the-top galas as preferred events.

# There are 15 hosts who have made the list every year since its inception. They are:

Aspen: Amy and John Phelan

Atlanta: Annette Joseph, Danielle Rollins

Dallas: Cindy Rachofsky

Houston: Becca Carson Thrash, Lynn Wyatt, Phoebe Tudor

New York: Ashley McDermott, Lela Rose

New Orleans: Julia Reed

Newport: Bettie Bearden Pardee

Palm Beach: Annie Falk

San Francisco: Ken Fulk

Washington, DC: Hilary and Wilbur Ross, Katherine and David Bradley.

Full disclosure: I do appear on this year's list, and for the second time (last year was for Milwaukee, this year is for Palm Beach). In my book, *Confessions of a Serial Entertainer*, I write freely about the irony of being thought of as a host of any note. My husband Rich (a solid Midwestern corporate software wonk and total jock) and I live in an unassuming 1970s condo with a small, nothing special kitchen. We both travel relentlessly for work, so much of our time at home is taken up by laundry and jet lag recovery.

Yet, without fail, a dinner party or a cocktail gathering will manage to work its way into our downtime, far more frequently than our friends with bigger, fancier digs. But ours are always modest affairs—a big bowl of chips and that old onion dip—or pigs in blankets and cucumber sandwiches if I can get my act together. One thing that I can say is that we always have enough booze and ice. If that qualifies me as an accomplished host, I'll take it. So here's to *The Salonniere* 100—it's always nice to be included.

## *THE SALONNIERE* NAMES AMERICA'S 2019 100 BEST PARTY HOSTS:

#### Aspen

Amy and John Phelan

#### Atlanta

Annette Joseph Cathleen Smith Bresciani Danielle Rollins James Farmer Sara Blakely

#### Austin

Kirstin and Joe Ross Mary Herr Tally

#### Bergen County, New Jersey

Herb Karlitz

#### Boston

Christy Cashman

#### Charleston

Carolyne Roehm

Patricia Altschul

#### Charlotte

Chandra Johnson Laura Vinroot Poole

#### Chicago

Alessandra Branca Cynthia Chereskin Irene Michaels

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#### Corpus Christi

Ronda Carman

#### Dallas

Brooke Davenport Cindy Rachofsky Nancy Rogers

#### Denver

Christine Vazquez Laura Moretz

#### Detroit

Grace Montero and Jay Rayford

#### Fort Worth

Cami Goff

Mercedes Bass

#### The Hamptons

Audrey Gruss Kelli Delaney Kot Tony Ingrao and Randy Kemper

#### Houston

Becca Cason Thrash Lynn Wyatt Phoebe TudorSheridan Williams

#### Lexington, Kentucky

Jon Carloftis and Dale Fisher

#### Little Rock

Shayla Copas

#### Louisville, Kentucky

Priscilla Barnstable and Patricia Barnstable-Brown Tammy York Day and Tonya York Dees

#### Los Angeles

Cheryl Saban Crystal Lourd Frances Schultz Hutton Wilkinson Irena Medavoy Jamie Tisch Jennifer Aniston Liane Weintraub Mike Meldman Nadine and Fred Rosen Renvy Pittman Stephanie Booth Shafran Suzanne Rheinstein

#### Miami

Gabrielle Union and Dwyane Wade Stephanie Aagaard Swanee DiMare Yolanda and Jeff Berkowitz

### Nashville

Ellen Martin Keith Meacham

#### **New Orleans**

Alexa Pulitzer Jane Scott Hodges Julia Reed Martine Chaisson Linares

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#### **New York**

Alex HitzAlex PapachristidisAllison SarofimAshley McDermottBunny WilliamsCharlotte MossDerek BlasbergIsabelle BscherJean ShafiroffJill KargmanLela RoseMuffie Potter Aston and Dr. Sherrell AstonRichard Keith LanghamStephanie NassSusan Gutfreund

#### Newport

Published annually since 2016, The Salonniere 100 is a party in print—indeed, it would make for the ultimate guest list. Organized by city, it names the area's top hosts as chosen by a judging panel comprised of McDonald at the helm, her staff and significant polling of movers and shakers from coast to coast. The list does not include event planners or other party professionals, only individuals known for their party prowess.

Bettie Bearden Pardee Pamela and David Ford

#### **Palm Beach**

Annie Falk Pauline Pitt Steven Stolman Terry Allen Kramer

#### Philadelphia

Eddie Ross

#### Phoenix

Carolyn Jackson

#### Provincetown

John Dowd and Dan Minahan

#### San Diego

Bridget McKenna Rebecca and David Vigil

#### San Francisco

Anne Hearst McInerney and Jay McInerney Aubrey Brewster Ken Fulk Monelle Totah and Gary McNatton Sloan Barnett

#### Santa Barbara

Oprah Winfrey

#### Savannah, GA

Alexandra Trujillo de Taylor

#### Washington, D.C.

Ambassador Gerard Araud Buffy Cafritz Hilary and Wilbur Ross Juleanna Glover Katherine and David Bradley Sheikha Rima Al-Sabah

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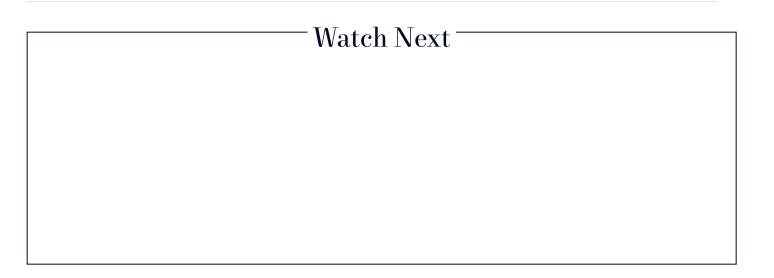
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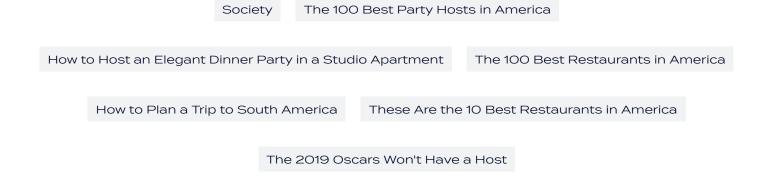
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