

based outfit, organizes on-location pampering productions (from budget-friendly gatherings to big-ticket blowouts) for (mostly) corporate clients, including Arista Records and the cast of *Saturday Night Live*. For a WE: Women's Entertainment event dubbed Me Time—a spa day thank you to advertisers—SPArty organized simultaneous parties in Manhattan, Chicago, and Los Angeles. In each locale, lofts took on a nouvelle Asian theme with white sheers, dark wood floors, Buddha statues, six-foot palms, and sparkling chandeliers. In between relaxing on white sofas in their spa robes and slippers, guests were treated to hand and foot or neck massages by roving therapists, and more lengthy



Something to smile about: Sequoia Aromatics' aromatherapy blends are integral to her uplifting events (far left); Vital Body indulges clients in limited edition Apothecary Fairy (www.apothecaryfairy.com) all-natural body products (left).

manicures, pedicures, facials, and massages were served in the 20 private spa rooms, all to the accompaniment of liquid lounge music, guava-ginger 'tinis, sushi, healthy spring rolls, and fruit with mint yogurt. "These events combine two things people love to do—spa and party. It's fun and different, and men and women both enjoy it," explains co-founder Alexis Ufland.

For a more tranquil scenario, there are "potion parties" as defined by Sequoia Lyn-James, where she uses aromatic botanicals such as rose otto from Turkey, neroli from Tunisia, or lemongrass from Nepal to transport guests on an inner journey that "uplifts their souls" or, at the very least, helps them relax. Through a combination of guided meditation and scent sniffing, guests intuitively select oils to create a custom blend. An accompanying reading opens up ways their potion can motivate them through personal challenges. "Friends enjoy listening to each other's readings. It's a fun, intimate, bonding experience," attests Lyn-James, who includes the personal scents as coveted giveaways. "Guests always leave uplifted and inspired and with a renewed clarity about their lives," affirms the aromatherapist, whose booming Los Angeles-based business has her jetting cross-country with her ornate box of oils and setting up outposts in Washington, Texas, and Maine.

Even more esoteric, Stace Nelson-Hicks, an acupuncturist and herbalist living in Ventura, California, has created a Chinese-inspired hybrid of celebratory rituals and treatments that she's

named Mei Shen, meaning "beautiful spirit." She comes bearing colorful blankets, fluffy throws, and lots of pillows to set the party's tone. Typically, the ceremony begins with an aromatherapy anointing according to the five elements of wood, fire, earth, metal, and water. Next, Nelson-Hicks conducts a tea ceremony, serving an herbal elixir designed to

open the heart meridian. An acupressure massage follows, along with Mei Shen acupuncture face-lifts. The party closes with a flame ceremony in which guests write down their wishes for the guest of honor—often a bride or mother-to-be—on "ghost" money that is burned as an offering, along with herbs, in an antique incense burner. The ashes are divided and wrapped in silk keepsake purses. "It's about creating a sacred space to honor a new journey into motherhood or marriage without playing hokey or traditional party games," says Nelson-Hicks. "I've made parties with up to ten guests for big birthdays, too. Or sometimes, just because it's Tuesday," she grins.

PARTY PEOPLE

Organizing a spa party enters a new dimension when you bring in the pros.

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