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## Houses fit for a party

With the party season in full swing, Caroline McGhie meets fun-loving home owners who have remodelled their properties with entertaining in mind.



Eat, drink and be merry: Stephanie Wheatley with son James and friend Josh in the dining area of her London home  
Photo: ANDREW CROWLEY

By **Caroline McGhie**

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**Comments**

Torquil and Stephanie Wheatley designed their house around their parties. The fun began six years ago when they bought in Portland Road in London's Holland Park. "The first party was perfect," says Stephanie. "We could trash the place because it was peeling inside and out." Then they restored the house and made the lower ground floor the "party zone".

"It is fabulous for entertaining," Stephanie says, "because it has a double-height atrium and you can look down from above. The doors to the outside concertina back, so the outside space becomes part of the living room. We put outdoor heaters there for parties in the winter. We have a Christmas party every year for 80. We can't fit in a single person more or it gets too crowded." This year she is even planning for a snow machine and ice sculptures.

Torquil works in the City and Stephanie is creative director of Wolf & Badger, the fashion and lifestyle retailer. She was formerly studio manager at Alexander McQueen, so the couple's parties are an eclectic mix of fashionistas and financiers. They buy impulsively. When they saw the Ralph Lauren Cape Lodge bedroom in the Bond Street store they bought the whole room, including the sheets.

Since moving to Portland Road they have had two children — James, 3, and Charles, five months — and the house has come into its own in a different way.



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“Children’s toys are kept upstairs, and downstairs is adult entertaining space,” says Stephanie. “We have a serious music system, and in the evening we kick back with a bottle and listen to music, or go down to the cinema room by the kitchen where we have a projector and blackout blinds. We can completely relax and ‘go out’ in our own house.” They are now selling to move closer to family in Surrey. Crayon (020 7221 1117) is selling at £3.25 million.

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The desire to gather to eat and drink and keep darkness at bay is irrepresible at this time of year. But some families like to mark feast days throughout the year. Jonathan and Judith Brenner have lived in what is an apparently ordinary double-fronted Victorian house in Kew Road, Richmond, for 10 years. But the back of their house opens into an enormous glass box as big as a ballroom. “Our kids were 11, 8 and 3 when we moved in, and we wanted a working room where they would have their computers and be in an open environment with us, rather than shut away in their rooms,” says Jonathan.



Jonathan and Judith Brenner’s Victorian home opens out into an enormous glass box

Their architect, Gregory Phillips, has won awards for the dazzling cube where Judith cooks and they have Friday night dinners together. “Ten years on, it still has a wow factor,” says Jonathan. “In summer you can slide back two of the three glass windows. We have had bar mitzvahs, drinks and canapés for 150 to 200 people, and a sit-down with a marquee in the garden. We have had wonderful 17th, 18th, 21st and 40th birthday parties.” The children are fledging now so they are selling the house, with six bedrooms, studio, gym and sauna, at £4.25 million (Knight Frank; 020 8939 2800).

What makes the perfect party house? Flamboyance, space, pools and tennis courts? Or is it enough to have a spectacular setting? Lamper Head, at Cornworthy near Dartmouth, scores in several ways as it was built by the very talented Roderick James of Carpenter Oak & Woodland in a soaring modern barn style, and it is set in Devon’s idyllic South Hams. There are seven bedrooms to swallow weekend guests, a huge indoor pool arched with wooden beams for rainy days, and decked terraces with sea views when the sun shines.

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Lamper Head at Cornworthy near Dartmouth

The proof that it has all the ingredients lies in the fact that the owners, George and Sandra Anderson, have been able to let it continuously for family gatherings, weekend parties, anniversaries, weddings and Christmases. Their house manager organises chefs, cleaners, boat hire and children's activities. In high season Lamper Head can let at £1,000 per day, and the agents say it has the potential to earn £150,000 a year. Marchand

Petit (01803 839190) and Savills (01392 455755) are selling at £2.1 million.

"It is already booked up to Christmas and beyond," says Sandra. "In summer it has an open-air boaty feel. In winter it is cosy and festive with beautiful cold

walks along the coast. The pool is as good as you find in any spa, and there is a spa room with massage and beauty facilities." The house also has a secret attic playroom for children, and a firepit and hot tub for outdoor sybarites.

[See more houses](#) perfect for parties.