



WHEN THEY ENTERTAIN, Darren Higman and Ross Rayburn (at left, standing inside) like to swing open the casement windows they installed in place of the home's dated jalousie (louvered) windows.
THEY ADDED A PAIR OF WINDOW SEATS just off the dining room with built-in storage for books, games, and CDs. Darren says, "It's the place where we sit down to read the *Times* or dive into a good book."



DARREN HIGMAN'S LOS ANGELES cottage makes the perfect backdrop for a casual supper

“We wanted easy spaces that were good for entertaining”

FIND IT FAST
BLUE POTTERY
JustArtPottery.com has an online store with more than 900 pieces for sale, including antique Van Briggle.

PAINTERS stripped the butler's pantry in the dining room to the raw wood before repainting it a soft white. (The beveled mirror is original.) Darren's collection of Van Briggle pottery fills the upper shelves.



“My approach to everything we did here was simple”



“OUR COTTAGE IS IN A HISTORICAL neighborhood called Spaulding Square, so the outside is pretty much original,” says Darren (at left). The front door opens directly into the living room.

WINDOWS ABOVE the farmhouse sink (below) overlook a narrow side garden filled with potted plants and bamboo. When Darren started renovating the kitchen, his wish list included a deep sink and marble countertops.

A BLOCK AWAY FROM SUNSET BOULEVARD, Darren Higman's cottage is ready for its close-up.

The back door is flung open to a lush garden filled with sago palms, climbing jasmine, and towering stands of bamboo. The scent of wisteria hangs heavy in the air, and Darren has moved a table outside for dinner with a group of close friends.

“This is my favorite spot to unwind at the end of a long week,” says Darren, senior vice president of Warner Music Group Soundtracks in Burbank, California. “So many people in L.A. go out to dinner at restaurants with the people they love. We like to welcome them here to our home.”

Darren and his partner, Ross Rayburn, have lived in their 1918 cottage since 1999. Darren discovered the home by accident on a Sunday afternoon while driving through the streets of Spaulding Square, a historic area of Los Angeles. “There was an open house that day, and I just stumbled upon the place. What captivated me from the start was how the house fit into the neighborhood and looked like it belonged. When I walked through and saw how well the rooms flowed into one another, I could just imagine myself living here.”

With the help of Pasadena architect William S. Long, Darren and Ross made a series of improvements. They stripped crown molding and woodwork throughout the three-bedroom house, extended the master bedroom to accommodate a new master bath, and replaced jalousie (louvered) windows overlooking the side garden with a more inviting group of casement windows and built-in seats. “It's not a very big house, so we created extra storage under the new window seats for books and papers. We love to move to that area after dinner now. It's also the place where we sit down to read the *Times* or dive into a good book.”



MUCH OF THE FIESTA WARE in the kitchen pantry came from Darren's grandmother. "We used it for our big family dinners," he remembers. "All the kids loved the mix-and-match feel." **THE OWNERS** love to set an outdoor table where friends can enjoy dining al fresco. The Southern California climate affords them this option almost year-round. As guests linger into the night, the lights overhead make the scene even more enchanting.



The adjacent living room in the house was fairly stark, and Darren was going to rip out the painted tile on the fireplace "because it looked so ugly." But Bill Long convinced him to wait "until we checked out what was under there," says Darren. After peeling away several layers of paint and discovering a full set of striking brown tiles, Darren decided to polish them and leave them in place. "That was a narrow escape," he says.

In the kitchen, Darren agreed to demolish a dark laundry room and build a stunning butler's pantry where he stores his collection of Fiesta Ware, much of it a gift from his grandmother. "My earliest memories involve her bringing out the Fiesta Ware so we could choose our favorite plates for supper," he says. "I like it now as much as I did then, and since it's all dishwasher-safe, we use it every day."

The pantry in the kitchen is patterned after an original butler's pantry in the dining room that holds a collection of turquoise Van Briggie pottery from Darren's hometown, Colorado Springs. Like the Fiesta Ware, some of those pieces were inherited from family, and Darren added to the collection whenever he found an object he liked.

"My approach to everything we did here was simple," he says. "I looked for pottery I admired, easy spaces that were good for entertaining, soothing colors on the walls, and furniture that was instantly comfortable."

Because the house is so welcoming, friends often drop by for impromptu gatherings. Darren loves to experiment with simple, market-fresh recipes that allow him time to visit with guests. "Everyone gets involved," he says. "Someone always arrives and immediately takes charge of the cocktails; someone else will make the salad while I'm out grilling. This is really an inviting house—and that's just what we wanted." ■ **[FOR RECIPES SEE PAGE 126]**

DARREN'S SUNSET MENU

(Try these easy recipes at home; see page 126.)

Sun-Dried Tomato and Goat Cheese Log

Arugula and Shaved Parmesan Salad

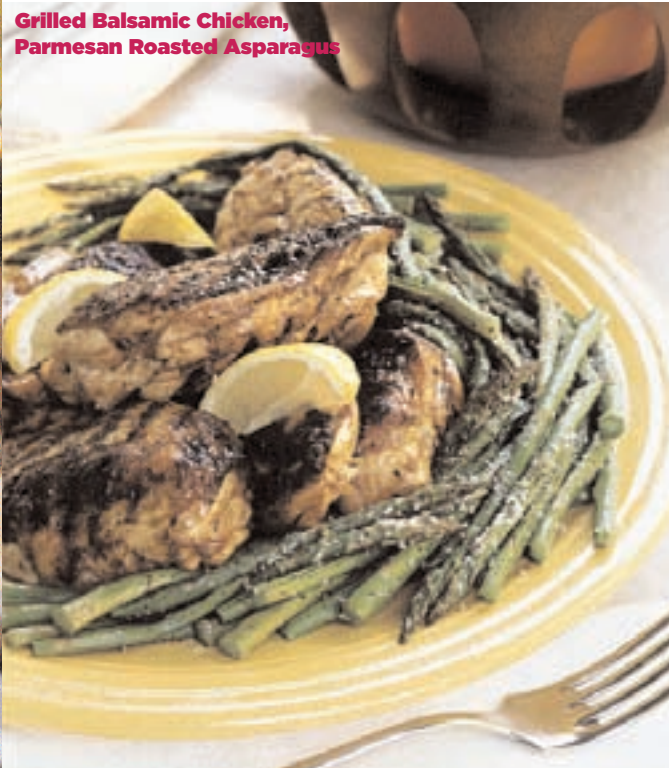
Grilled Balsamic Chicken

Parmesan Roasted Asparagus

Fruit en Papillote



“I like to entertain the old-fashioned way—at home”



Grilled Balsamic Chicken,
Parmesan Roasted Asparagus

ENTERTAIN WITH EASE

Meet Darren Higman and see his Los Angeles cottage on page 96. Read on to try his simple recipes for a casual supper with friends

GRILLED BALSAMIC CHICKEN

MAKES: 8 servings

PREP: 10 minutes; marinate 4 to 6 hours or overnight

COOK: 12 minutes

- 8 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves
- 1/2 cup chicken broth
- 1 cup balsamic vinegar
- 1 1/2 tablespoons Worcestershire sauce
- 2/3 cup chopped scallions
- 2 tablespoons minced garlic
- 2 teaspoons dry mustard
- 1 teaspoon freshly ground pepper
- 2 tablespoons sugar
- 1/4 cup Dijon mustard

- 1.** Rinse chicken, and pat dry. Place in a gallon-size zip-top plastic bag. Combine chicken broth and next 8 ingredients in a mixing bowl.
- 2.** Reserve 1/2 cup marinade; pour remaining marinade over chicken. Seal bag, and refrigerate up to 24 hours, turning occasionally.
- 3.** Grill chicken, uncovered, at medium-high for 6 minutes on each >

PROP STYLIST: ROBIN TURK; RECIPE DEVELOPER: DARREN HIGMAN



Arugula and Shaved Parmesan Salad



Sun-Dried Tomato and Goat Cheese Log



Fruit en Papillote

“Someone always arrives and takes charge of the cocktails; someone else will make the salad, while I’m out grilling”

side or until cooked through, basting with reserved ½ cup marinade every few minutes.

PARMESAN ROASTED ASPARAGUS

You can also grill asparagus while you’re cooking the Grilled Balsamic Chicken.

MAKES: 6 servings

PREP: 5 minutes

COOK: 15 minutes

2½ pounds asparagus

2 tablespoons olive oil

⅓ teaspoon kosher salt

⅓ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

½ cup freshly ground Parmesan cheese

Garnish: Lemon wedges

1. Preheat oven to 400°.
2. Peel bottom half of asparagus stalks if they are thick. Arrange asparagus in a single layer on a sheet pan, and drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle with kosher salt and pepper. Roast at 400° for 15 minutes or until tender.
3. Sprinkle with Parmesan, and let stand for 1 minute or until cheese begins to melt. Garnish, if desired.

SUN-DRIED TOMATO AND GOAT CHEESE LOG

The goat cheese and olive oil mixture can be prepared several days ahead. Cover and store in the refrigerator.

MAKES: 8 servings

PREP: 10 minutes

COOK: 3 minutes

2 tablespoons olive oil

2 garlic cloves, thinly sliced

1½ tablespoons capers, drained

1 cup sun-dried tomatoes packed in oil with herbs, drained and thinly sliced

1 (11-ounce) log goat cheese, thinly sliced and brought to room temperature

1 loaf crusty bread, cut into ½-inch-thick slices and lightly toasted

1. Heat oil over medium-high heat in a nonstick skillet. Sauté garlic 30 seconds. Add capers and tomatoes to pan; sauté 2 minutes or until heated through. Remove pan from heat, and allow mixture to cool.
2. Arrange cheese on platter, and spoon tomato mixture over cheese. Serve with toasted bread rounds.

ARUGULA AND SHAVED PARMESAN SALAD

MAKES: 6 servings

PREP: 10 minutes

1 garlic clove, minced

½ teaspoon salt, divided

2 tablespoons balsamic vinegar

2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice

3 tablespoons minced fresh basil

¼ cup finely grated Parmesan

¼ teaspoon freshly ground pepper

½ cup olive oil

1 (5-ounce) bag arugula

Garnish: shaved Parmesan

1. Mash garlic with ¼ teaspoon salt.
2. Whisk together garlic paste, remaining ¼ teaspoon salt, balsamic vinegar, and next 4 ingredients. Continue whisking, and slowly add oil until mixture is well blended.
3. Toss with arugula, and garnish, if desired.

FRUIT EN PAPILOTTE

Use remaining fruit mixture for breakfast the next day. It keeps in the refrigerator for up to two days. En papillote (see Glossary) is an easy way to present cooked fish and vegetables, as well as the season’s best fruit. Serve with your favorite vanilla ice cream.

MAKES: 8 servings

PREP: 45 minutes

BAKE: 8 minutes

6 tablespoons butter, melted and divided

5 tablespoons light brown sugar

¼ teaspoon ground allspice

¼ teaspoon ground cinnamon

¼ teaspoon ground cloves

¼ teaspoon ground ginger

3 medium peaches, peeled and sliced

3 plums, sliced

1 cup fresh blueberries

½ cup fresh raspberries

1. Preheat oven to 450°.
2. Cut 8 (8-inch) pieces of parchment paper, fold each in half, and cut in a semicircle. Unfold circles, and brush 1 tablespoon melted butter along 1 half of circle where fruit will go.
3. Combine 5 tablespoons melted butter and next 5 ingredients in a large bowl. Add fruit, and toss gently to coat.
4. Place ½ cup fruit mixture along buttered side of paper circle. Fold and press edges over twice in ¼-inch folds to create an airtight seal. Arrange on baking sheet.
5. Bake at 450° for 8 minutes or until parchment packets puff up and release juices.
6. Transfer to serving plates, and slice open packets. ■

