

Us' guest entertaining editor dreams up a "polished," mid-century modern party for her close-knit crew

How to
Throw a

GAME NIGHT

BY LAUREN CONRAD

STYLING: TARA SWANSON; HAIR: STYLIST: KIRSTIN LEE; MAKEUP ARTIST: CAROLINA FERRELL; MANICURIST: CAROLAN; PROP STYLING: KATE MANTREALE; FOOD STYLING: ADAM HANSON

Since the early days of their romance, Lauren Conrad and husband William Tell, 37, have relished an evening in playing cards and charades. "We're competitive," she admits. Plus, the set up is simple. "You provide the game and snacks, but there's not a lot of planning to do," says the new mom (son Liam arrived July 5). The *Celebrate* author typically invites four or six pals ("for even teams") to kick back with Old Fashioneds and fondue served in vintage pots. "They're really easy to get from Etsy, eBay and flea markets," assures the LC Lauren Conrad for Kohls designer. If it won't disrupt the action, set up your nosh where you're sitting. "Otherwise," she explains, "you're kind of creating two separate activities."

COCKTAILS

» Whiskey "felt appropriate" for a *Mad Men*-era bash, says Conrad. While she'd typically abide by a two drinks per person per hour average for a large party, the Little Market cofounder, 31, plays it looser for an intimate gathering. "When you're having a small group, you know your friends and how much they'll consume," she notes. Gold-accented glasses tie into the retro aesthetic, but "they're not silly — you can easily incorporate them into the rest of your dishware."

ENTERTAINMENT

» "I love a thematic playlist to set the mood," says Conrad, but ultimately, Tell — who once played guitar in rock band Something Corporate — is in charge of music. For this, he chose from a selection of vinyl records. As for the actual games, the lifestyle expert favors backgammon and Pictionary, but she suggests tailoring it to your crowd. Whether you pick teams or let guests choose is also a matter of preference. "I like being with my husband," she says. "We're on the same wavelength."

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FONDUE

Station

Invite guests to go for a dip (or several) with a "fun, interactive" spread that caters to both savory and sweet palates

CHEESE

Classic recipes tend to rely on Gruyère and Emmentaler spiked with a healthy plug of white wine. Chopped herbs aren't standard, but they do add a pop of freshness and color.

DIPPERS

- Broccoli
- Zucchini
- Cherry tomatoes
- Red potatoes
- Green apple
- Baguette

CHOCOLATE

A high-quality semi-sweet or milk base melted over low heat pairs well with fresh fruit, but mini versions of richer desserts make for a decadent treat.

DIPPERS

- Strawberries
- Blondies
- Starfruit
- Clementines
- Meringues
- Toasted marshmallows

STYLING: TARA SWANSON; HAIR/STYLING: REBECCA WINKLE; ARTIST: C. MICHAEL FERRER; MAKEUP: CARLA VIVIAN; PROP STYLING: KATE MARTINEAU; FOOD STYLING: ADAM