

IMMERSIVE HOSPITALITY

on a Budget

Transforming an Ordinary Pop-Up Tent into a Welcoming Period Space

After the deeds and exploits of war, which are claims to glory, the household is the first thing that strikes the eye, and which it is therefore most necessary to conduct and arrange well.

Georges Chastellain, fifteenth century

A class and companion handout, presented by

Baroness Annabella of the Bay

Part of the Immersive Hospitality Research Series

The Heart of the Matter



A full collation, built almost entirely from thrifted dishes, grocery food, and greenery.

Hospitality is the experience. The tent is only the vessel.

- A warm welcome under a bare canopy beats a flawless pavilion with no host.
- The things that matter most cost nothing: a greeting, a seat, shade, a cup of water.
- Everything that follows is just craft in service of that welcome.
- Start where you are. One project per event. The welcome comes first; the rest accumulates.

The Older Duty

Before it was decoration, hospitality was a sacred duty. To welcome the stranger was a charge, not a courtesy.

- The welcome itself is the sacred part. Extend it to everyone who comes.
- Devotional touches, a shrine, a candle, a blessing, an oath table, are a choice, never a requirement.
- If you include them, make them invite rather than exclude. Our gatherings hold many beliefs and none.



An oath table: scales for balance, a chain for bonds freely chosen, coins as tokens for guests to keep. A devotional touch offered, never imposed.

Making the Pop-Up Less Modern

The canopy is a frame waiting to be dressed. Two projects do the most.

Sew a new cover

- Use the original nylon top as your pattern: trace, add seam allowance, sew.
- Canvas drop cloths or cotton duck are cheap, take paint and dye, and breathe in the heat.
- Solid natural colors (cream, tan, ochre, dull red) read period from across a field.

Add handmade dags

- A dagged valance changes the whole silhouette. It is the fastest high-impact fix there is.
- Cut scallops or points from felt (no hemming needed) or canvas.
- Attach with ties or clips so they come off for storage and transport.
- If a full cover is too much right now, start with dags alone.



The dressed interior: walls, tapestry, and table together turn a bare canopy into a room.

The Walls

Walls make a room and hide the campsite behind you. Interior walls matter most; that is where guests linger.

- **Thrifted curtains:** solids, damasks, heavy weaves. Mismatched panels in one color family still read as intentional.
- **Painted drop cloths:** stripes, heraldry, or a faux tapestry in ordinary craft paint.
- **Also good:** flat sheets, tablecloths, wool blankets. Avoid busy modern prints.
- **Hanging:** from a cord run between the legs, using bungees, clip rings, or grommets.
- **Let the fabric reach the ground.** A wall that floats looks like laundry; a wall to the earth looks like a room.



Hung banners and patterned panels turn bare tent sides into walls, and give guests a place to sit and play.

Disguising the Frame

After the cover and walls, the metal legs and modern chairs are the last giveaways.

The legs

- Gathered curtains, tied at top and bottom, or
- Sewn sleeves: a simple fabric tube slipped over each leg.
- Bonus: both pad the sharp brackets that catch sleeves and shins.

The chairs

- A rectangle of fabric draped and tied at the back transforms a folding chair in seconds.
- Thrifted sheets, curtain panels, and tablecloths all serve.
- Keep the cushion. Comfort is itself a form of hospitality.

The Collation and the Hospitality Table

Know what you are offering. A feast is seated and formal; a collation is a light, grazing spread of fruit, cheese, bread, and sweets. Your field table is a collation, and that is entirely period.

The table illusion

- A plastic folding table vanishes under a floor-length cloth.
- The one rule: the cloth must reach the ground on every side a guest can see.
- Layer it: a plain full-drop cloth underneath, a decorative runner or cloth on top.
- Weight or clip the corners against the wind.



Green over black, both reaching the floor. The folding table disappears; the spread does the rest.

The Day Board

The food is hospitality made visible, and it is cheap to do beautifully. Generous and simple beats fancy and sparse, every time.

Serving pieces

- Thrifted platters, wooden bowls, ceramic dishes, baskets.
- A collected, slightly mismatched look reads more period than a matched set.

Affordable foods

- Grapes, apples, berries, carrots, radishes, cheeses, breads, olives, nuts, dried fruit.

The one rule that matters most

- **Always take food out of its packaging.** Grapes in a wooden bowl are immersive; a plastic clamshell is a supermarket.

Practical notes

- Keep food shaded and covered against sun and insects; mind food safety in the heat.

- If you serve the populace, a small allergen card is a kindness.
- Set out water with a pitcher or ladle. Offering a drink is the oldest welcome there is.



Out of the packaging and into good dishes: cured meats, cheeses, fruit, dates, nuts, and a little sugar-work.

Scent

The most overlooked layer, and one of the strongest. Smell reaches memory directly, and undoes sunscreen and hot nylon faster than anything.

- Strew fresh herbs (rosemary, lavender, mint, bay) to release scent underfoot.
- Burn beeswax candles for a warm, honeyed smell unlike modern paraffin.
- Where flame is safe: a little incense, or warmed cloves and cinnamon.
- Where flame is not: pomander oranges studded with cloves.
- Keep it light. Some guests are sensitive; pleasant beats perfumed.



Pillar candles and caged lanterns add warmth and low light; greenery overhead softens the frame.

Greenery

Living greenery makes a space feel tended and alive, and it is very nearly free.

- Swags on the eaves, garlands on the table, branches in a jug, rushes underfoot.
- Gather with permission. Take only what is plentiful, and never strip a site.
- Evergreens, ivy, bay, and supple leafy branches hold up well through a day outdoors.
- Pairs with scent: a bay garland frames the food and perfumes the air at once.

Budget Shopping Cheat Sheet

| Item | Where to Find It | Use It For |
|---------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Canvas drop cloths | Hardware store | Tent cover, painted walls |
| Curtain panels | Thrift store linens | Walls, leg curtains, chair covers |
| Flat sheets, tablecloths | Thrift store | Walls, table drapes, chairs |
| Felt or cotton duck | Fabric store remnants | Dags and valances |
| Platters, bowls, baskets | Thrift store housewares | Day board service |
| Cord, ball bungees, clips | Hardware store | Hanging walls and dags |
| Beeswax candles, cloves | Grocery, craft store | Scent and ambiance |

| Item | Where to Find It | Use It For |
|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------------|
| Fresh herbs, greenery | Garden, with permission | Scent, garlands, strewing |
| Fruit, cheese, bread, nuts | Grocery store | Day board, unpackaged |

Begin Where You Are

- You do not need to do all of this, or any of it, at once.
- Pick one project for your next event. It accumulates into something beautiful.
- From the first day: greet people, invite them in, give them a seat and a cup, learn their names.
- The welcome is the whole point. The fabric and food and candlelight only help it land.

Welcome them well.

Appendix: Period Recipes for the Board

Each recipe suits a board: made ahead, served at room temperature or cold, and forgiving of a day outdoors. Given first in the original words, then in plain translation, then in a form to cook from today. Original spellings are kept from the period texts; translations and redactions are my own.

German Filled Krapfen

A filled pastry pocket, baked or fried, savory or sweet. Made small and baked, they travel and keep well.

IN THE ORIGINAL

So du wilt einen vasten krapfen machen, so nim nuezze vnd stoz sie in einem moerser vnd nim epfele als vil vnd snide sie drin wuerfeleht vnd menge sie mit wuertzen, wellerley sie sin, vnd fuelle daz in die krapfen. vnd lege sie in ein pfannen vnd la sie backen.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Take nuts and pound them in a mortar; take as many apples and dice them; mix with whatever spices you have; fill that into the pastry, lay them in a pan, and bake.

TO MAKE IT TODAY

- Dough: about 2 cups flour, a quarter cup softened butter or oil, a pinch of salt, warm water to a firm, rollable pastry.
- Filling: 1 cup ground walnuts or hazelnuts, 1 cup finely diced tart apple, 1 tsp warm mixed spice (cinnamon, ginger, a little clove), honey to taste.
- Cut rounds, fill, fold and seal, bake at about 375 degrees until golden, roughly 20 minutes. Serve at room temperature.
- Savory option: fill with seasoned cooked meat or a sharp cheese, the older tradition of the dish.

Source. Das buoch von guoter spise (The Book of Good Food), recipes 59 to 62, house-book of Michael de Leone, Wuerzburg, about 1345 to 1354. Edited by Hans Hajek, Berlin, 1958. English study and translation by Melitta Weiss Adamson, Krems, 2000.

English Chewets, Small Hand Pies

Small pies documented in England from the late fourteenth century into the early seventeenth. Sturdy little hand pies, ideal for a board.

IN THE ORIGINAL

Take ther lire of Pork and kerue it al to pecys, and hennes therwith, and do it in a panne and frye it, and make a Coffyn as to a pye smale and do therinne, and do theruppon zolkes of ayrenn harde, powdour of gyngur and salt, couere it and bake it wel and serue it forth.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Cut pork and hen's meat to pieces and fry them; make a small pastry case and fill it; add hard egg yolks, powdered ginger, and salt; cover, and bake well.

TO MAKE IT TODAY

- Gently cook about half a pound each of minced pork and chicken; off the heat, stir in 2 chopped hard-boiled egg yolks, half a teaspoon ground ginger, and salt.
- Spoon into small pastry cases, cap with a lid, bake at about 375 degrees until golden, roughly 25 minutes.
- Tudor sweet-and-savory version: minced roast capon or veal with a little suet, spiced with mace and cinnamon and a touch of sugar, plus raisins, currants, and dates.

Source. The Forme of Cury, recipes 185 and 186, the master cooks of King Richard II, about 1390. Edited by Samuel Pegge, 1780. Later form: Thomas Dawson, The Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchin, 1594.

Cold Roast Fowl with Agraz

Cold sliced roast fowl with a bright, tart green sauce. Entirely make-ahead.

IN THE ORIGINAL

Nim wintriubele und stoz sur epheler, diz tu zu sammene, menge ez mit wine und drueches uz. dise salse ist gut zu scheffinem braten und zu hueenren und zu vischen und heizzet agraz.

IN PLAIN WORDS

Take grapes and pound sour apples; combine; mix with wine and press it out. This sauce is good for roast mutton, hens, and fish, and is called agraz.

TO MAKE IT TODAY

- Roast a chicken or capon the day before, cool it, and slice it cold for the board.
- Agraz: blend a generous cup of tart green grapes with one peeled, cored, sour apple and a splash of white wine; strain; season with the smallest pinch of salt.
- Spoon the cold sauce over the sliced fowl, or set it alongside for dipping.

Source. Das buoch von guoter spise (The Book of Good Food), the recipe named agraz, about 1345 to 1354. Edited by Hans Hajek, Berlin, 1958.

A Few Sources

On the cookery

The Forme of Cury (c. 1390), ed. Samuel Pegge, 1780; Das buoch von guoter spise (c. 1345 to 1354), ed. Hans Hajek, 1958, trans. Melitta Weiss Adamson, 2000; Thomas Dawson, The Good Huswifes Handmaide for the Kitchin, 1594; Das Kochbuch der Sabina Welserin (c. 1553), trans. Valoise Armstrong.

On hospitality and the household

Georges Chastellain on the noble household, the source of the epigraph; Rene d'Anjou, Le Livre des Tournois (c. 1460); Jean Froissart, Chroniques; accounts of the Field of Cloth of Gold, 1520; Maria Hayward on Tudor textiles and tent culture.