

Guests, Again.

Written by L.A. Plume

Wednesday, 20 January 2010 12:35

Whenever I think I'm not going to do it again, I'm reminded of my friend's advice, "There are people who entertain, and then there are those who merely attend life from time to time." My dinner guests are always delightful, or maybe I've simply learned to choose them well. I'm certain most of them read this column and got the hint.



It's the house "guests" that leave me feeling like I'm struggling for air. And here is where I have to differentiate between those whom I actually invite, and those who require a room between points on their travels. The former will always be welcomed with open arms; to the latter I will say the inn is closed for renovations this year. No matter which, the linens have to be laundered, beds made, premises cleaned, food and beverages readied. For some reason I feel it is more work to do all this for one night than for several. It's not, of course; it is merely the work to joy ratio that is diminished. There are those people for whom one night is too many. Usually they're headed north or south, they've driven all day and are tired, they arrive just in time for cocktails and dinner, then they go to bed and get up and leave early in the morning. Although their car is packed full with their stuff, they won't have had room to stick in a bottle of wine to share; they will have, however, a cooler of road food that will need to reside in your refrigerator overnight. These people are not guests, they are passers-through.

There are occasions when you will want to see these people, it may be the once a year opportunity, or you may be angling for a vacation to their summer home next year, or need to stay with them along the way on your own road trip. There are things you can do as the passer-through to make your host's life easier and find yourself more welcome the next time.

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This also applies to going to stay with anyone for just one or two nights. Take your own sheets – the bigger the better if you don't know what size their guest bed is. Put your sheets on top of their sheets, then when you leave, you take your sheets along with you; their bed is still made. Or tell them not to make the bed – you will be bringing your own sheets. Towels are a bit trickier because you may not want to travel with wet towels, but it is a whole lot easier for the hostess to wash some towels than to make, strip, wash, and remake a bed. Or at the very least, ask them what they want you to do with the sheets – can/should you strip the bed, put the sheets in the wash, etc.

Take your hosts out to dinner. If for some reason that isn't feasible, at least take a bottle of wine or their favorite beverage – it won't take you long to pop into a store to pick something up. Consider the price of a hotel room plus meals compared to taking your host out to dinner or a gift of something thoughtful. This may be their home, but someone still had to pay for the wine and groceries. Call when you are within an hour or so of arriving so your hosts can finish whatever they are working on and get themselves ready. No one likes to be caught off guard by people knocking on the door without warning.

The key is not getting yourself invited; it's getting invited back.