

Feasts AND Fetes

Yuletide at Winterthur celebrates the beauty and joy of holiday gatherings.

by Alison Buchbinder



Whimsical table settings recalling holiday traditions of the du Pont family will be on display during Yuletide.



The holiday season is a time for enhancing the elegance quotient of entertaining, and this year's Yuletide celebrations at Winterthur will sparkle with a veritable feast for the eyes. Visitors will be transported to a world of holiday entertaining inspired by well-loved traditions and stylish gatherings from Yuletide's kick-off on November 22 until January 4, 2009.

Graceful table settings will pay homage to the fashionable flatware showcased in the *Feeding Desire* exhibition (see page 14) while fanciful holiday decor will illuminate Winterthur's period rooms. Entertaining vignettes, including a 1930s dance with jazz musicians and a lively 19th-century market, will add to the celebration of the season.

A Brandywine Valley Tradition

The du Ponts celebrated the holidays with panache, and this year's Yuletide takes its cue from many of their traditions. New Year's Calling, a day of family visiting and gift-giving begun by the first du Ponts who lived in the Brandywine Valley, was an

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eagerly anticipated event and is still celebrated today. The du Pont women would host teas at their homes while the men traveled from house to house delivering gifts. The Baltimore Drawing Room will depict a 19th-century New Year's Calling with stacks of gifts overflowing the parlor tables. The Du Pont Dining Room will show the du Pont family's 1900 New Year's dinner that honored their first 100 years in America.

Other rooms will reflect more recent du Pont traditions. Rooms set up with card tables, gifts, and special decorations will portray the parties for which Henry Francis du Pont and his wife, Ruth, were known, and the Hall of Statues will feature a "tree" of stacked poinsettias in the tradition of H.F. du Pont's cousins Lammot and Pamela du Pont Copeland.

Elsewhere at Winterthur, the loveliness of the season will be evident. Contemporary designers will transform


the Conservatory with fresh interpretations of holiday decorating. The beloved dried-flower tree will appear in the Port Royal Entrance Hall.

Guests can enjoy special events where they will learn to cook historic treats, listen to music of the season, and attend demonstrations. They can also experience a holiday meal at one of several Yuletide brunches. Outside, the East Terrace and the Box Scroll Garden will bloom with festive adornment.

Jeff Groff, Winterthur's director of public programs, hopes that "visitors will be inspired to add a new tradition, such as hosting their own New Year's Calling." As is the case every year, Yuletide promises a whole season of elegance. ❖

Alison Buchbinder is a graduate of the Winterthur Program in American Material Culture.



 Yuletide at Winterthur runs November 22–January 4, 2009. For reservations, please call 800.448.3883 or visit winterthur.org.

