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Sandy Hill:

Hostess, Adventurer, Author

Beautiful books on entertaining are never in short supply, but perhaps no author in the genre is as interesting as the writer behind the stunning new *Fandango: recipes, parties and license to make magic*.

Sandy Hill is one of those impossibly perfect women. Boundless energy, impeccable taste, engaging, fascinating, and, as put by her friend Martha Stewart, writing in the forward of *Fandango*, “intrepid.” Those who follow the world of outdoor sports will remember that Hill, between the years of 1990 and 1996 scaled each of the Earth’s “Seven Summits,” an honor she shares with just a handful of other climbers.

As if that were not enough, Hill is also a renowned party-thrower, having hosted countless small-but-fabulous parties for friends, as well as dozens of large events for organizations on whose boards she has served, including amFAR (the American Foundation for AIDS Research) and the New York City Ballet. With husband of six years Tom Dittmer, she also recently purchased a vineyard and winery, Oak Savanna Vineyard in Los Olivos, Calif., where she entertains regularly.

Hill says she wrote the book to share her passion for entertaining. It’s full of ideas, stunning photos and recipes created by accomplished chef Stephanie Valentine. All kinds of parties are addressed, from a lakeside dinner with friends to a July Fourth blowout for hundreds. There are also parties featuring treasure hunts, grape picking, poetry readings, plus the most inventive holiday ideas imaginable.

Hill believes that people have lost sight of the rewards of entertaining. “This book is about entertaining in a knock-yourself-out-for-a-good-time way,” she says, explaining that putting as much effort as possible into a party—especially when it comes to the menu—shows guests how much you treasure their company. “I think of the meal as the gift I am giving to my guests in return for their visit, and so I always strive to make it the very best I can offer,” she says. “When a host’s heart is in the occasion, it always shows, and guests have a better time because they are inspired and energized by it.”



Who: Sandy Hill, outdoorswoman, socialite, writer, entertainer, wine-maker and author of the new book, *Fandango: recipes, parties and license to make magic*. (Artisan, \$45).

Personal: With husband, Tom Dittmer, divides time between Los Olivos, Calif., New York City, Miami, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and Alamos, Mexico. She has one child, Robert T. Pittman, and two stepchildren, Jason Dittmer and Alexis Gaughan.

Why you might know her: Famous mountain climber who’s scaled the “Seven Summits;” named one of 1994’s “Women We Love,” by *Esquire*.

Of course, the most important element of a successful party is the human element. “The most successful parties always have a great mix of people at them; not only do I aim for mixes of interests and professions, but I try to get diverse personality mixes, too.”

She adds, “The chemistry of my guests is what makes a party magical.”

Life Story

Expert entertainer and author of the newly released *Fandango*, Sandy Hill grew up in Northern California. Life after graduation

from UCLA brought her to the East Coast, where she worked in publishing—as an editor for such publications as *Brides* and *Mademoiselle* and as a contributor to *USA TODAY*, *Allure*, *Vogue*, *Skiing* and *Men’s Journal*. What Hill is most known for, though is throwing some of the most talked-about parties in Manhattan, hosting major events for such organizations as the Dance Theatre of Harlem and the Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center.

Growing up in California gave Hill a love for the outdoors. Add to her resume the titles fly-fisherman, wing shooter, skier, horseback rider and sea kayaker. Touring the Arctic by kayak in search of narwhal whales, crossing the Masai Mara in Kenya on horseback, retracing the steps of Lewis and Clark in Montana and trekking to the remotest regions of Mexico, India, Bhutan, China, Nepal, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan and Morocco are just a few of her adventures.

Most notably, Hill has also succeeded in scaling the Seven Summits—the highest points on

each continent, including Mt. McKinley in North America, Aconcagua in South America, the Vinson Massif in Antarctica, Mt. Kilimanjaro in Africa, Mt. Elbrus in Europe, and Puncak Jaya in Indonesia. Early in 1996, Hill and a team of climbers were caught in a deadly Everest snowstorm that took the lives of eight of the climbers. Hill survived and went on months later to successfully reach the 29,028-foot summit of Mt. Everest, making her the fourth American woman on that peak and among the first people in the world to have reached the Seven Summits.

What’s a woman to do after she’s scaled Everest? Why not open a winery? With Tom Dittmer, her husband since 2001, Hill recently purchased Oak Savanna Vineyard. Located in California’s Santa Ynez Valley near Santa Barbara, Oak Savanna produces small fermentation lot, hand-crafted artisanal wines under two labels, Oak Savanna Vineyard and Oak Savanna Cellars. The winery is run under the supervision of expert winemaker Andrew Murray. Hill and Dittmer also have an estate on the property, where many of the gorgeous *Fandango* party scenes were photographed.