

# living

## Cheese Whiz

Food writer Janet Fletcher is a master at fondue. Follow her lead for creating (and enjoying) a stylish yet relaxed evening built around this party-perfect dish.

BY ERIN SIMPSON  
PHOTOS LARRY BARTHOLOMEW  
STYLING CAROL HACKER

**CHEESE WHIZ**

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NOVEMBER STYLE

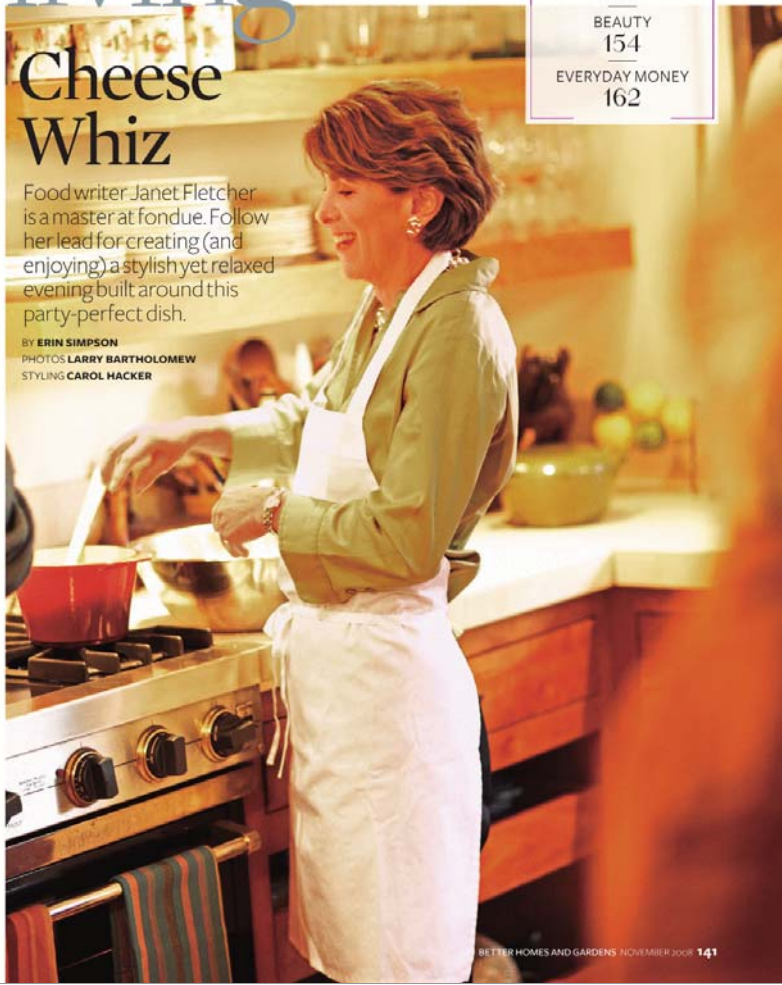
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BEAUTY

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EVERYDAY MONEY

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**Janet creates an inviting scene** by keeping things simple. She opens the evening with seasoned olives (hers are spiced with crushed fennel and garlic, but serve any you please). The carefree table has informal mats, linens, and ceramic dinnerware. Janet's husband, Douglas, makes sure everyone is happy by serving Rosebuds—his signature drink of four parts white wine and one part Campari.



**Fondue is an easy dish** that suits many occasions. Once you learn this basic recipe, you're armed. Janet's go-to fondue is a ratio of 1 cup white wine per pound of shredded cheese that has been tossed with 1 tablespoon of potato starch (also called potato flour) for a velvety texture. Heat the wine in a fondue pot or small Dutch oven then stir in the cheese a little at a time. Once it is all melted add 1 tablespoon of Kirsch (cherry-flavored brandy). Janet's favorite cheese blend is two-thirds of a mild Swiss cheese such as Gruyère or Emmentaler and one-third of a more aromatic cheese like Fontina or Appenzeler. Find these cheeses in specialty stores and large supermarkets.

**Warm it up** by filling the table with colored earthenware dishes to hold the bread cube dippers.

I prep everything before the party. Then after just a few minutes at the stove, the fondue is on the table and ready for dipping.

—JANET FLETCHER



We like to create a casual feeling around the table. Our friends have more fun if we're relaxed and enjoying the evening with them.

—JANET FLETCHER

## Find your style

Go for mismatched sets, rich earthy colors, and rustic, woven pieces. Everyone will feel welcomed and at ease at your table.



### Fuss-free flair

Janet and her winemaker husband, Douglas, entertain friends at their home in Napa, California. She likes to tie in pieces of hers that reflect the warm and rustic feel of the wine country. Here are some of her favorites:

1. Woven leather bench, \$198; NapaStyle stores or [napastyle.com](http://napastyle.com)
2. Calvin Klein tonal band napkin, \$10; [calvinklein.com](http://calvinklein.com); round

rattan place mat, \$8; Pier 1 Imports; stores only.

3. Vintage shrimp forks, \$24 set of 4; NapaStyle stores or [napastyle.com](http://napastyle.com)

4. Le Creuset Traditional Fondue set, \$140; Broadway Parhandler stores or [broadwayparhandler.com](http://broadwayparhandler.com)

5. Wood slice coasters, \$19.95 set of 6; Zgallerie stores or [zgallerie.com](http://zgallerie.com)



### About Janet

Janet Fletcher is a food writer and weekly cheese columnist for the San Francisco Chronicle. A winner of two James Beard Foundation Awards, she has authored two books on cheese including *Cheese & Wine: A Guide to Selecting, Pairing, and Enjoying* (Chronicle, \$24.95).

