

Deborah Norville, TV anchor dining room

After seven years, three children, countless family dinners and a dozen blowout parties, the dining room in Deborah Norville's 70-year-old rambling country home in a New York City suburb has seen plenty of living. "How else do you think the chairs got to look like this?" she asks, pointing out the stains and threadbare patches on the striped silk upholstery. In September the five-bedroom house was put into semiretirement when Norville, 42, host of the syndicated newsmagazine *Inside Edition*, along with her investment banker husband, Karl Wellner, 46, and their three children—Niki, 9, Kyle, 5, and Mikaela, 3—relocated to a townhouse in Manhattan. Now, says Norville, the family will use the house as a summer and weekend getaway—and as the site for their biennial St. Lucia Christmas celebration, a tradition harkening back to Wellner's Swedish roots. The formal dinner party for 50 friends—next scheduled for 2001—"is not special if you do it every year," says Norville, who serves Swedish glug, Lucia buns, smoked salmon and caviar, brought in by a caterer. The 30' x 30' space, anchored by a mural from the late 1800s, is the perfect backdrop for the festivities. Pale green paneling and leaded French doors and windows are all original. "A lot of people buy a house and then change everything," says Norville's close friend Joan Rivers. "They didn't. You get such a feeling of continuity." The couple did have the ceiling painted and the wood floor sanded and refinished. "When you have kids who throw food, you don't get a rug," Norville says. "It would just get destroyed." ■

Photographs by Todd France; hair: Glaziers; dress: Dior; jewelry: Michael Muller; shoes: Prada; home: Dan O'Rourke; styling: [unreadable]

▲ When entertaining, Norville likes to mix and match her china and crystal.

▶ Frequent guest Joan Rivers calls her perfect hosts Barbie and Ken.

