

# PERFECT WEEKEND sydney pollack

Oscar-winning film director Sydney Pollack began his career as an actor four decades ago. He has gone on to direct and produce over 40 feature films. This year he released his first documentary, *Sketches of Frank Gehry*.

**B**ecause I'm away a lot I like my weekend to be pretty ordinary: staying at home in L.A. I've lived in this house for 21 years. It was built in the 1950s and it's not grand, but the architect, Wallace Neff, was famous for his beautifully laid out houses, so there are at least two walls of windows in every room. It is surrounded by an English-style garden, secluded by bushes and tall trees, so you can sit out back or at the side by the pool.

I like to spend the day cooking and having the family and a few friends over for a casual supper. I have two daughters, Rebecca and Rachel, who are married with children and I'll try and get some of them over. There will be a gang of people and it will be very informal.

I cook in advance so that I don't have to do a lot of preparing while guests are in the house – something like beef and carrots, which needs about four hours of cooking. So I get up early on Saturday and go shopping for ingredients.

We have great stores here at Pacific Palisades. I choose organic, up to a point. Just to label food organic does not mean it's necessarily better for you. I buy at Wholefoods (which sells organic everything), or at the other upscale supermarket called Gelson's. It's a well laid out store with rows of produce – fresh, local and good quality.

I don't know amounts because I just go by eye, but you need beef on the bone, veal shank, slab bacon and a couple of pounds of fresh carrots. You just throw it all together with white wine – which you almost never do with meat, but it preserves the carrots' colour and texture.

I collect wine and if I provide good wine my two sons in law will drink it. I buy from Wally's and also Bipin Desai, a well-known collector. He's a physicist by trade, but he's really a major wine expert. Occasionally he finds a collection that he'll pass on to me. I'm more prone towards French and Italian wine than Californian, although I like Californian whites, which I think are delicious.

I aim to serve dinner at 5.30pm, so I would skip lunch and put the food on around noon. The family arrive at around 1.30pm, the kids swim, and the adults sit around talking. We would start the meal



with a white, often a Californian sauvignon blanc or chardonnay, and then switch to red when the food goes on the table. My beef and carrots should be served with a good, full-bodied red wine like a Pauillac.

After dinner I go into my den and put on some music. My taste is very eclectic. I can go from Jack Johnson to the Dixie Chicks. If I know people are coming over I'll try to collect some new stuff they might not have heard. It is the same as the way I like to make a movie. You try to move people in some way, and it's a good feeling. I collect things off the iTunes music store, or I'll shop at Tower Records. At the end of the night I just go to bed and they go home when they want.

On Sunday I always get up fairly early. When I'm not working on a film I can take a little extra time without guilt on Sunday morning. For me a great luxury is to be

able to dawdle over coffee with the paper. Sometimes I'll read a book. My brain has been so rotted by years of bad scripts that when I can read for pleasure it's a holiday.

Alternatively I'll run a film on DVD in the media room upstairs – something I missed when it came out that I want to catch up on. Most of the time I'm merely trying to keep up with new movies.

And then I start to think about what I'm going to cook. I guess my love of cooking is an antidote to films. They are both about combining ingredients, but the thing about a meal is you know pretty quickly how it's going to turn out, and if you mess it up you get to do it again tomorrow. That's not true with a film – where you don't know if you've done it right for two years. By the time you know what you've screwed up with a film, it's too late to do anything about it. **CAT MARTIN**

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