

‘Novelties,’ liven parties

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We’ve all been to those gatherings cleverly disguised as parties where someone is trying to sell us boring things we have no use for. The Downtown Diva has certainly endured her fair share of Tupperware parties, candle soirees, and of course, Mary Kay Cosmetics parties.

I always feel obligated to buy products I really don’t need due to a soft spot for the hostess – we’ve all been through it, no?

So, last Tuesday evening, when I was invited to the lovely south Fort Myers home of freelance book editor Tiffany Yates for an Athena’s Home Novelties party, I rolled my eyes just a bit. My closets are already cluttered with an array of novel accessories – did I really need more cranberry scented candles, countrified wicker baskets, or hand-woven matching place mats?

Suddenly, everything hanged when I discovered the novelties in question would be far more fascinating than Tupperware and consisted of items with names like “Kama Sutra Oil of Love,” “The Happy Heart,” and “The Micro Butterfly” (obviously, this is a family publication, so my dear readers will just have to use their savvy imaginations).

Despite the “wink-wink, nudge-nudge” aspect of the party, everything was really quite tame and tasteful, and yet succeeded in reducing a room full of mostly married or attached women ranging in age from their early-30s to their mid-50s into giggly school girls. There were about a dozen of us in attendance including, for instance, a housewife or two, a Sunday school teacher, and an attorney – plus one token lucky guy – downtown real estate agent Terry Tilley who was summoned to provide a helpful male perspective on the products for sale.

It was fun seeing radio personality Jenny Smith of WJPT-FM, while Stacy Kosluchar chatted up a glowing Liz Abbott (she and her hubby, actor Greg Longenhagen, are happily expecting their first baby in a few months). Lawyer Jane Lane socialized with Dean Park resident Terri Hagood as we all enjoyed the delicious chocolate-covered strawberries created by Dee Stemle. Our Athena’s representative light-heartedly introduced herself as our “romance goddess of the evening” and broke the ice by calculating our adult film star names (something about the third letter in your first name and the second letter in your middle name, etc.), christening moi “Montana Leather Rock.”

Personally, I thought it sounded rather like the name of an expensive ski resort. Our charming goddess explained that the party was all about “putting some spark into romance, while having a raucous good time,” and I must agree. I laughed harder than I have in a long time and, trust me, I certainly spent LOTS more money than I ever have at any Mary Kay party!