

Easy Entertaining With A Twist

(NAPSA)—Parties and get-togethers are a chance to relax and socialize but the pressure of preparation can make the days leading up to the event very stressful for the host—though not if you plan properly.

“Hosting a get-together for family or friends doesn’t have to be complicated or expensive,” said Jennifer Bushman, chef, author of “Kitchen Coach: Weeknight Cooking,” for busy cooks who want to make delicious food fast, and owner of a popular cooking school in Reno, Nevada. “By following a few easy tips, party hosts can ensure that everyone enjoys the next get-together, including themselves.”

In order to guarantee a relaxing and enjoyable evening, party preparation should be easy, yet sophisticated enough to impress your guests. Abandon the notion that every bite of food served needs to be homemade. Make a couple of crowd-pleasing dishes that you do well and are easy to prepare. Augment the rest of your appetizers with a cheese tray from the grocery store or an assortment of elegant bakery items.

Buying prepared foods from your favorite deli or restaurant is a practical alternative to spending hours in the kitchen. Simple garnishes like parsley, seasonal flowers or fruit make a lovely presentation that will look special.

Stress-free Entertaining Tips

- Never prepare anything for the first time to serve at a party; go with familiar and time-tested standbys that are crowd favorites.
- Do what you do best and buy the rest; dress up store-bought hummus with a drizzle of olive oil and some chopped parsley; pick up a cheese tray at the deli and add seasonal fruit and flowers as garnish.
- Forget the full dinner buffet and serve a lot of hors d’oeuvres instead. For a 90-minute party you’ll need five to eight pieces per person.
- Don’t feel the need to decorate your entire house; simply dim the lights and use lots of candles.
- Experts at André Champagne Cellars recommend a “sparkling bar,” set up away from the food so guests have plenty of room to mingle.
- Make sure that all preparation is done by the time the first guest arrives. The only thing that should be left to do is greet each guest, perhaps with a glass of champagne at the door.



For large cocktail parties, forget passed hors d’oeuvres and use your dining room table as a buffet. The best items to serve are those that can be eaten in one bite,

eliminating the need for utensils and cutting down on cleanup. One-bite appetizers are also easily held in one hand, allowing your guests to walk around the room and mingle.

Instead of stocking a full bar, cut down on costs and preparation by creating a theme and serve a signature drink. One popular and festive option is to create a “sparkling” bar with a non-alcoholic fizzy fruit punch and a variety of sparkling wines. Sparkling wine can be terrific at any party. It’s seen as festive and fun and gives guests a chance to toast a celebration.

Some hosts or hostesses might be apprehensive about opening multiple bottles. Fortunately, there is a bubbly on the market with a new closure that easily twists off and even reseals for later use.

A popular bubbly, André[®] Champagne Cellars, is making it easier and more convenient for party hosts to serve a special beverage by introducing “Twist & Pop,” the easy-to-open, resealable closure that keeps bubbles for days after opening. Whatever your guests don’t finish at tonight’s party can be used for mimosas at tomorrow’s brunch.

By following just a few easy tips, hosts and hostesses can have a successful and hassle-free party.