

Entertaining Made Easy

(NAPSA)—There are a host of easy entertaining solutions that can make throwing a party easier and more fun.

Whether you focus on the multitude of food preparation shortcuts offered in food magazines and by experts, or select timesaving prepared foods from local grocery stores, you can look like a pro without the work. Try these tips:

- Have your guests bring a dish to share, whether a dessert or a bottle of wine—it's one less thing for you to fret about.

- Get your guests involved in the entire cooking process. Since parties tend to gather in the kitchen, why not give people a fun job? Ask them to stir, baste, or even shake the martinis.

- Build your menu around a whole roast or bird such as turkey or chicken that has a Pop Up disposable cooking thermometer in it. Large cuts of meat require little attention while cooking and the thermometer helps ensure that the meat is cooked to a safe temperature but not overcooked.

Even best-selling cookbook author and noted Life & Style expert Sandra Lee, of "Sandra Lee Semi-Homemade Cooking" on the Food Network, advocates choosing a roast or turkey with a Pop Up disposable cooking thermometer.

"It is a safe, accurate and convenient way of ensuring that the roast is not under- or overcooked and makes cooking easy and delicious," adds Sandra Lee.

- Make side dishes ahead of time and reheat just before serving. That way, you spend more time with your guests and less time in the kitchen.

Easy Twice-Baked Potatoes

- 4 medium baking potatoes**
- ½ cup butter, cubed**
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder**



Making these Easy Twice-Baked Potatoes a day before the party will give you more time with guests.

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- 1 tablespoon dried parsley**
 - 1 tablespoon finely diced onions**
 - 3 tablespoons pre-packaged real bacon bits**
 - 1½ cups packaged shredded cheese (use your favorite)**
 - ½ teaspoon salt**
 - ¼ teaspoon pepper**
 - ¼ cup milk**
 - Pre-grated Parmesan cheese**

Wash unpeeled potatoes and prick with a fork. Microwave according to your microwave directions until soft. Place butter in large bowl. In separate bowl, combine remaining ingredients except milk; set aside.

Cut cooked potatoes in half. Scoop out center of the potato and add to butter. Place skins in greased shallow baking dish. Mix potatoes with the butter; add milk. Stir in cheese mixture. Spoon potato mixture into skins. Sprinkle with Parmesan cheese.

Warm in microwave or oven until cheese melts; broil 1 to 2 minutes for toasty tops. Can be made a day ahead. Serves 6–8.

Visit www.volkenterprises.com for a list of meat and poultry brands that come with the thermometers.