

ENTERTAINING IDEAS

High-End Entertaining On A Budget

(NAPSA)—Cutting back on extravagances doesn't have to mean an end to entertaining in style. There are easy, inexpensive ways to entertain for less and still have a great time with your friends. Here are ideas to consider:

Fun Finger Foods

Sometimes hosting a cocktail party at home can be an expensive endeavor but saving money doesn't mean you have to scrimp on the sophistication and fun. Forget hors d'oeuvres with expensive ingredients such as shrimp or crab. Instead, play around with traditional favorites by mixing it up.

- Consider this enjoyable and inexpensive recipe for a pretty party dip:

Cucumber Dip

2 cups unflavored yogurt
2 small cucumbers, peeled and diced
8 scallions, finely chopped
2 cloves garlic, minced
¼ cup fresh chopped mint
(2 Tbsp. dried) plus a little for garnish
Salt and pepper to taste

In a small bowl, beat the yogurt until smooth. Fold in the garlic and scallions. Season with salt and pepper. Fold in the mint, then add the cucumber. Garnish with a tablespoon of mint. Chill before serving.

- Get a few interesting cheeses from the grocery store, grill them on toasted bread and cut them into tiny grilled cheese triangles. The exciting twist on traditional treats and bite-size appeal of these appetizers can offer ele-



Entertaining does not have to cost a lot of money if you serve fun finger foods, delicious dips and inexpensive but flavorful drinks.

gance and flavor without requiring much effort from you.

- Sliders or minihamburgers are another great way to add a fun twist to classic favorites. Add unique ingredients such as grated onion or brown sugar for a little extra flavor.

- For a vegetarian option, bake crushed pecans or walnuts in a mixture of butter, Cajun seasoning, chili sauce and Worcestershire sauce. Not only will guests savor the spicy seasoning, you can do the prep for either of these creative crowd pleasers the day before your party, giving you time to relax, mingle and enjoy the party.

Elegant Ambience

While good food and interesting drinks are key elements for your stylish event at home, don't forget the ambience. Adorn tables with vases of colorful seasonal fruits and vegetables. Choose various shapes and sizes for an appealing arrangement. You'll achieve a look of classic elegance that's more cost effective than floral bouquets—especially since you can later use the centerpieces in a hearty soup

or salad. Soft lighting is another way to lend a touch of elegance. Scatter tea lights and candlesticks amongst the decor to set the tone for the entire affair.

Unique Wine Pairings

Another way to save money on entertaining is to simplify your bar. Merlot, Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, Chardonnay—with all the wine varietals out there, it can seem hard to find a good match for the diverse foods you'll be serving. Fortunately, you don't have to risk overwhelming your guests with too many choices: Just stick to two fun and fantastic wines.

For example, Seven Daughters Red and White Winemaker's Blends are each made up of seven different grape varietals, each contributing a unique flavor that is interesting on its own and considered fabulous when combined. Both are sophisticated options that pair well with an assortment of dishes, a way to achieve contemporary elegance without breaking your budget.

Mix Up A Signature Cocktail

In addition to serving wine, come up with a signature cocktail—it's a simple way to creatively customize your soiree. Try mixing things up with muddled fruits, new liqueurs or classic, old-school cocktails. Many delightful recipes can be found online and it's a great way to enjoy mixology for the evening. By limiting your drink selection to a signature cocktail and new, stylish wines, you can save money and time.

To learn more about each distinct varietal and how they blend together to achieve a mix of approachable sophistication and fun, visit www.7daughters.com.