

Extraordinary Celebrations!

by Susan Spindler

Fearless Entertaining!!

In the past few years there have been many books, periodicals, and television shows bombarding us with lavish and elaborate ideas on entertaining, which have caused many of us to develop “entertaining anxiety.” We are led to believe that everything has to be perfect, and that just isn’t possible or practical. You should enjoy the process of having friends or family over, not dread it.



is a surprise. Suggesting the dress code is also important if it is a special type of event. I personally like using www.paperlesspost.com if you are sending out e-vites. If you are the one being invited, always RSVP by the date requested as it is very difficult for your host/hostess to plan otherwise, and it is just common courtesy.

Sight

Plan to have your home ready and the table set two days in advance. Fresh flowers can arrive the day before, or if you are arranging flowers yourself, get this done a day ahead as well. Make sure linens are all nicely pressed. If using place cards for a sit down dinner, plan who is sitting where. Flowers in the powder room are also a nice touch. Mix and match china patterns and glassware/crystal to make the table more interesting. A wonderful book by Kimberly Schlegel Whitman called, *Tablescapes: Setting the Table with Style* has beautiful photography and great ideas that can be a great inspiration and help with your creativity. Some of my very own tablescapes can actually be seen in Whitman’s book.

Sound

Plan your background music ahead of time as well. If you are planning to have a harpist or a pianist, make sure you plan appropriate music for your event.

Taste

Decide whether you are having a potluck dinner in your kitchen, outdoor barbeque on the patio, a buffet in your dining room, or a formal sit-down event. Avoid being overly ambitious when creating a menu. Choose recipes that allow you to do as much preparation ahead of time as possible. You want to be enjoying your guests. Another alternative is to order-in if cooking isn’t your thing. There are so many great gourmet take-out foods, or you can drop off your casserole dish at your favorite restaurant and have them prepare your meal. If you do enjoy cooking, choose a foolproof menu. If the local baker makes a better dessert than you, then by all means purchase theirs. Have the appetizers ready when guests arrive, and stay on time for serving dinner.

Touch

Gorgeous linens on your table never go unnoticed as they set the background for the table settings. Monogrammed linen dinner napkins and/or linen placemats always add a custom look.

Smell

From the moment you welcome your guests at the front door, there is a tone created setting the stage for a wonderful meal and conversation. The aroma of food, flowers, and scented candles greet your guests. Keep the flowers simple and low so they can stay on the table and not block anyone’s view. Never use scented candles on the dining table, as that interferes with

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A gathering, whether it is a party, dinner or luncheon, is an occasion to share good times and delicious food. Entertaining has nothing to do with spending large amounts of cash or impressing people. It’s about the process and the fun! The principles of planning a party are always the same, and when dealing with each step one by one, is very doable. The objective is to create memories and moments that everyone will cherish. By creating a relaxed, friendly atmosphere, you and your guests will all have a memorable time. The host/hostess sets the mood, so being organized and planning ahead is the key! Below are some ideas that I advise my clients on when planning an event at their home. Most of these guidelines can apply to any size of gathering. The main point I would like to make is to plan ahead.

When planning a large party or a small dinner party, or even a wedding, always keep the five senses in mind: **sight, sound, taste, touch, and smell.** Determine the type of party you want to have, and if you are going to have a theme or just getting the gang together. If you are planning a party over a busy long weekend or the holiday season, it is best to send out a “save the date” to let your guests know ahead of time. If there is no “save the date,” then invite each person at least two weeks in advance. Your invitation should reflect the colors and theme of your gathering. Invites should have date, time, location, occasion, host names, directions, RSVP date, and whether it