

Dinner Party Planning Checklist

Two weeks before

- Plan the menu - whether it is a casual gathering or formal affair, decide what you are making. Think about dishes you can make ahead and freeze or that will keep in the fridge for a few days. If you need to order anything special, you should have plenty of time to place an order with a butcher or grocery.
- Clean any crystal, dishes, or silverware (if using anything that fancy). Or purchase fun and festive holiday plates and napkins that can be tossed when you're done.

One week before

- Give your house or apartment a good cleaning. You can spot clean the day of, but do the heavy cleaning now.
- Make your shopping list and check your pantry for items that might need replaced (the less often used items).
- Work out your cooking schedule. I like to work backwards from the time I plan to eat. Get out all of your recipes and set a timetable for each dish that needs cooked. Think about items that can cook together. And don't forget warming time for things that you made ahead or need a quick warming like bread or rolls.
- Make any of your recipes that can be made ahead and frozen. Many appetizers, soups, side dishes and desserts freeze well.

Three days before

- Shop for food and beverages.
- Prep all veggies ahead (wash before you put them away, cut or dice as needed for recipes).

One day before

- Set your table for a formal dinner or set out serving platters and dishes for a buffet.
- Another quick cleanup of your house or apartment.
- Do any other prep or cooking you can before the day of the party.

One hour to go

- Empty your dishwasher, cleaning as you go helps eliminate the pile up of dishes and leaves you less likely doing frantic clean up before guests arrive.
- Get dressed and freshen up.

- Check your menu and cooking list to make sure you have everything warming or finishing in the oven. If you forgot something – don't sweat it! Move on with everything else.

30 minutes left

- Uncork the wine
- Turn on your music
- Toss your salad
- Warm the bread • Light candles
- Get a sip of wine and prepare for the early guests...there is always one, if they do show up early, put them to work! Most people like to help, and are glad to do so if asked.
- Relax and enjoy your friends and family