

# Party Planning Checklist

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## The Plan

### Two to Four Weeks Ahead

- Create a budget.
- Draw up a guest list.
- Choose a location.
- Decide on a menu: appetizers, main dishes, side dishes, desserts, beverages.
- Send invitations (four weeks ahead for major holidays).
- If you're doing all the cooking, plan to make as much as you can ahead of time to minimize cooking and kitchen cleanup on party day. Map out a timeline for cooking, freezing, thawing, reheating, etc.
- If it's potluck, assign the dishes.
- Birthday party? Order the cake if you're not baking it yourself.
- Reserve rented items such as plates, cups, glassware, coffee urns, tables, chairs, table linens, serving pieces, etc. (It's especially important to book early for busy holiday seasons.) Arrange for delivery on party day.
- Hire help for kitchen, serving, or bartending if you have a large group.

### Two Weeks Ahead

- Assess serving pieces and utensils if you're not renting.
- Assemble party favors, if desired.
- Start compiling party music, games, and other entertainment.

### One Week Ahead

- Review menu preparation timeline--are you on target with make-ahead dishes?
- Purchase non-perishable food items and candles, firewood, etc.
- Finalize RSVPs.

### **Three Days Before**

- Clean house.
- Polish silver.

### **Two Days Before**

- Purchase fresh meats.
- Make sure camera is charged and ready.
- Wash wine glasses and other glassware if you're not renting.

### **One Day Before**

- Purchase fresh produce.
- Clean and press table linens if you're using your own. To prevent creases, drape pressed linens on the table instead of folding them.
- Set table or decorate buffet.
- Set up the bar.
- Lay out serving pieces and utensils.
- Purchase and arrange flowers.
- One more quick run with the vacuum cleaner and dusting cloth.
- Stock plenty of toilet paper and put out the guest towels.

### **Party Day**

- Purchase fresh seafood.
- Take delivery of rented equipment.
- Buy party ice.
- Chill beer and wine (if necessary), make punch.
- Garnish party platters with fresh herbs, edible flowers, and fruit.
- Put finishing touches on decorations.
- Eat something light before guests arrive.
- Spin the tunes and greet your guests.