



Holiday Entertaining

The Simply Smarter Way



Intro

'Tis the season for spreading joy and cheer, holiday entertaining time is here! There's plenty to love about the ending of one year and the start of another; whether it's the Thanksgiving leftovers that you're most excited about or the cold winter nights, we have the perfect guide to help you and your family celebrate.

So be prepared to do this season the simply smarter way, where the kid's table is now the ultimate hangout spot, and the perfect holiday cocktail is no longer a nice-to-have, it's a must-have.

Seasons greetings from Homes.com, let's get to entertaining!

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Prep & Clean-up

Okay, we get. You've done everything you can for party prep, but there are still some straggling to-do items to be crossed off your list. Don't panic! A multi-purpose tool and a storage bin are all you need to get your home ready:




Set a timer for three minutes.

Grab your storage bin and gather as many items cluttering your space as you can. Focus on tidying the areas you know your guests will be spending the most time in. When you're done, place the bin in a hidden area like a bedroom closet.



Grab your multi-purpose cleaning tool to clean up dirt and debris.

Our favorite is Hoover's [ONEPWR Blade MAX Cordless Vacuum](#). It transforms from an upright vacuum to a handheld unit in seconds, giving you the option of quickly cleaning your floors, furniture, and upholstery with just one tool.



Parties are notorious for leaving behind food crumbs, footprints, spilled drinks, and a mountain of dishes. With so much to tackle, maximize your time by layering tasks in order of things you can walk away from to ones needing hands-on attention.

For example:

- + Throw your table linens into the washing machine.
- + While they're washing, load your dishwasher (smallest items first).
- + Run the dishwasher, and then soak any leftover dishes in the sink.
- + While they're soaking, mop any hard floors your guests used. For a convenient option, we recommend the cordless [Hoover ONEPWR FloorMate Jet](#).

Designed to vacuum and wash your floors simultaneously, cleaning is quick and simple. Plus, it uses the same removeable, rechargeable battery as the ONEPWR Blade MAX (and seven other cleaning tools), so you can swap out batteries for a longer runtime.

- + While the floors dry, check for any items guests may have left behind and arrange your entertaining areas back to their pre-party places.



With all the time you'll save layering your tasks, the only thing left for you to tackle is figuring out when to host your next party!



Holiday Tablescapescapes & Food

How-to Turkey, Tips for Cooking the Bird (baked, fried, etc.)

Among most holiday meals, the turkey is the central dish that unites all the others for the perfect spread. Here's how to make your turkey as delicious as it is memorable.

Baked

Q: How big should your turkey be?

A: ~1-1 ½ pounds per person

Q: How long should you cook your turkey?

A: ~15-20 minutes per pound

Q: What temperature?

A: 325° F - 350° F depending on your turkey's size, the internal temperature when it's done cooking should be 165° F.

Q: How long should I thaw my turkey?

A: One day for every four pounds.

Q: How to make skin crispy?

A: Make the skin crispy by adding a layer of herb butter on top and underneath the skin.



Fried

1. Defrost, clean out, and wash the turkey. It's important the turkey is completely defrosted before lowering into the oil... or else!
2. For maximum flavor, the bird needs to be injected with seasonings like garlic and herbs, Italian seasonings, or for a spicy kick, try a cajun flavor.
3. Don't forget to get under the skin for extra crispiness!
4. Use oils with a smoke point higher than 375F, like peanut or canola oil.
5. Get your oil to 350F, then slowly lower the bird into the pot.

Top Tips:

- + Smaller birds work best, 10 to 15 pounds are ideal.
- + Fried turkeys cook much faster than traditional oven turkeys, about 3-4 minutes per pound, so make sure you time it right with the rest of the meal.
- + Don't forget the industrial oven mitts to get the bird out of the fryer!



Mix and Match Table Settings



Bring out your fine china and nice napkins when having a holiday dinner, it'll impress your family and friends and take your status as a holiday entertainer to the next level.



Make sure you have a table that offers plenty of room for guests and the food. Feel free to improvise by moving chairs, tables, and other furniture to make as much space as possible.



If you're celebrating a religious holiday, tie in traditional elements throughout your tabletop decorations.

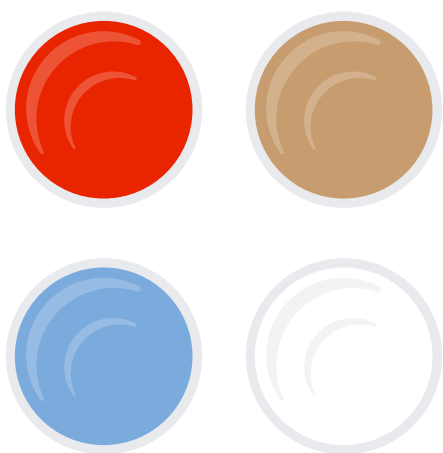


To add a simple centerpiece, use a piece of garland and tall candles to bring out the holiday spirit.



Versatile Color Guide

Must-Haves



Red, Blue, Gold, White

Separately, these colors can capture the essence of virtually any holiday.

- + Use red ribbon to create a table centerpiece for Thanksgiving!
- + Gold accents can help ring in the New Year and add a bit of shine.
- + Blue goes great if you're celebrating Hanukkah or Christmas!

Nice-to-Haves



Silver, Orange, Purple, Green

- + These colors complement the must-haves and will help add more depth to those tricky holiday decorations!



Games for the Holidays



Gift Tag

One person at the beginning of the festivities gets gifted a gift bow. The goal is to stick that bow onto someone without them noticing. Throughout the night, opponents should be checking to see if they got “tagged” with the bow. If they forget and have the bow on before the night ends, they lose!

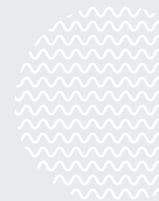


Holiday Parade Bingo

This one is easily a family favorite!

Some bingo card suggestions to get your game started:

- + A child wearing a red hat
- + Someone playing the trumpet
- + The Snoopy float
- + Someone throwing candy to the crowd



Secret Santa

Probably one of the most popular holiday games, Secret Santa is a great way to combine gift-giving and family bonding. Pre-plan a couple of weeks before Christmas, or Thanksgiving if it's hard to get everyone together, and let people pick names out of a bowl. Once everyone is assigned someone (no telling!), set a price range which the gift has to fall between, then swap gifts on Christmas or Christmas Eve!

Best of 2019

This is a really fun way of reflecting on all of the “best” moments over the past year. There will be categories such as “Best Song,” “Favorite Memory,” and “Best Story,” etc. Take some time before your event to figure out what categories would be good topics of conversation, this could even be an awesome icebreaker for your gathering! Each guest will write down their answers and take turns in the spotlight sharing their favorite moments and opinions.



Seasonal Music

Make sure your party is fit with all of the right music. Whether it's to make you dance or just fill the background, it's always a great idea to have tunes everyone will love. You can find pre-made playlists on Spotify, Pandora, or Apple Music, or you can make your own! Here are some holiday hits you shouldn't forget:

Thanksgiving Theme - **Vince Guaraldi Trio**

All That Meat and No Potatoes - **Louis Armstrong**

Sweet Potato Pie - **Ray Charles**

Rockin' Around the Christmas Tree - **Brenda Lee**

The Chanukah Song - **Adam Sandler**

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer - **Burl Ives**

Winter Wonderland - **Bing Crosby**

Let It Snow! Let It Snow! Let It Snow! - **Frank Sinatra**



The Ultimate Kid's Table Crafts

We love the little ones, but when it's time to celebrate there must be some order in the house to keep things running smoothly. The best way to keep your younger guests out of trouble is to occupy them with something productive - in this case, that "something" is crafting! Crafting offers an artistic way to involve the young ones in something that can be created and displayed in your home during the holidays. Plus, it keeps them entertained while adults enjoy other festivities! Here's some ideas you'll want to include in your craft table this year:



Thanksgiving pinecone turkey

You'll need some pine cones, so scour your backyard or neighborhood for free ones, or purchase store-bought. You'll also need feathers, crafting pom poms, googly eyes, some orange and red felt for the beak and waddle of the turkey, and glue to hold everything together accordingly. Start with the pine cone on its side — the smaller end will be the head of the turkey — and glue down a pompom with the googly eyes settled on top. Then, add the beak and waddle. As the pinecone progressively gets wider, you'll glue in feathers that point out vertically. *And... Ta-dah!*



Paper Holiday Ornaments

This one is super easy and is all about what the kids want to make! Cut holiday-like shapes on construction paper, feel free to use different colors, cut multiple shapes, or whatever the heart desires. Either stick with gluing hand-cut decorations or take it a step further and add piping, pom-poms, jewels, or all of the above. Hole punch the top of the ornament and stick string or a wire ornament hanger through and say hello to the newest addition to your holiday decor!





Food for Thought

Get ready to “wow” your friends with some quick, easy-to-make snacks and finger foods that still bring in that touch of holiday cheer. From sweet to savory, look no further for the ultimate snack inspiration guide you need to celebrate this season.



Charcuterie Board

Just grab a variety of meats and cheeses, serve with seasoned crackers or toasted bread, and watch your guests enjoy a simple, but delicious treat. If you want to take it to the next level, add in some fruits like figs, grapes, or apples!



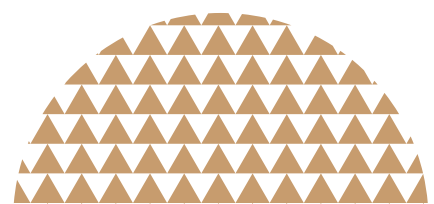
Cranberry Blondies

This one's a simple take on everybody's favorite, the Blondie! Just add in some cranberries and the zest of an orange to any Blondie recipe as you'll get that quick, bite-sized seasonal fix!



Thanksgiving Sliders

Put those Thanksgiving leftovers to good use and make slider sandwiches for your friends to enjoy!





Moose Crunch

The best combination of salty and sweet: Popcorn, caramel, and chocolate drizzle perfectly coated to create the ultimate party snack.



Cheddar Biscuits

A fan favorite when you're looking for good comfort food, cheese biscuits take you away from the winter cold and into the warm coziness that southern food offers. Trust us, these won't disappoint.



Gingerbread Men

An easy way to bring everyone together is through delicious food, especially if it means freshly baked cookies. Either buy some plain gingerbread men (or sugar cookies, we don't judge) and some icing, and get to decorating!

Create Your Own Cocktail Bar



Red Wine



Spiced Rum



Apple Cider



Brandy



Whiskey



Cinnamon Sticks

Create Your Own Cocktail Bar



Diced Apples



Eggnog



Club Soda



Orange Juice



Cranberry Juice



Vodka

Create Your Own Cocktail Drink Inspiration



Christmas Sangria



Spiced Rum Eggnog



Red Wine Hot Chocolate





Photo Booth

Must-Haves



Necklaces



Party Blowouts



"Year" balloons

Nice-to-Haves



Props



Tinsel backdrop



Confetti/Sequins







We hope you've enjoyed our simply smarter approach to holiday entertaining. While our guide starts you on the right path to becoming an expert host, our blog is home to even more entertaining tips and tricks.

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