

How to Host a Low-Cost, No-Stress Dinner Party

Entertaining friends and family in your home is a much bigger undertaking than many people realize. While it may seem like a more "low key" option than going out, in reality there are a lot of things that go into a successful dinner party it's no wonder that a host can easily get carried away and spend more money than intended. To help combat this trend, read on for five tips to help you plan an entertaining, original dinner party without overspending.

Keep it small.

Often times, people go overboard when planning dinner parties especially during the summer season and the holidays. You can prevent this by limiting your guest list to a number that will fit comfortably into the space you have (comfortably being the operative word). A good rule of thumb is to only invite as many people as can be seated around the table (without cramming extra chairs in the corners). If you're determined to have a larger guest list, you might consider skipping dinner in favor of appetizers and cocktails.

Keep it simple.

Avoid the temptation of going all-out gourmet for your dinner party it's extremely expensive and highly unnecessary. Instead, pull out your cookbooks or do some online searching. There are plenty of web sites that have full menus prepared, which can be searched by occasion, main ingredient, or any number of other identifying factors. And you're bound to find something that will be both delicious and cost-effective.

A good goal to have is to make your event a reflection of you. You want your guests to feel comfortable and enjoy themselves don't worry about impressing them with fancy caviar or overpriced champagne. Odds are your guests will appreciate a relaxed, well-executed get-together more than a stuffy, ultra-glam event, anyway.

Embrace technology.

As mentioned previously, there are literally hundreds of online recipe and cooking forums. With just a little bit of research, you can find a wealth of great ideas for easy, delicious appetizers, main courses, sides, desserts and even cocktails (or mocktails for the non-drinking set always keep your guests in mind!).

Another great technological tool is the evite. Forget spending money on invitations and postage spend a little time designing a unique invitation online and send it out to your guests with a click of the mouse. Plus, evites allow you to make updates if needed, add guests, and monitor your RSVP list easily and conveniently.

Two words: pot luck.

A great way to limit the stress of planning and orchestrating a dinner party is to unload some of the responsibility. Consider asking guests to pitch in by bringing an appetizer, dessert or beverage to share. This allows you to focus on the main dish, while ensuring everyone will have something to munch on that they will genuinely enjoy. It's a good idea to coordinate who is bringing what so you don't end up with an unbalanced table, but it will save you a lot of work (and money).

Decor: less is more.

If you're determined to attach a theme to your dinner party, be careful not to go overboard. Choose a theme that can be visually represented without a lot of work or extra spending on props. With a little creativity small, simple decorations can easily create the overall effect you are trying to achieve, and won't break your budget for the event. If you aren't going the themed route, stick to simple items like fresh cut flowers and candles to create an enjoyable atmosphere that's both aesthetically pleasing and comfortable.

Remember, the goal of your dinner party should be to bring together a group of people you want to spend more time with, and to treat them to delicious food, entertaining conversation and a comfortable, welcoming atmosphere. With a little planning, hosting a no-fuss, inexpensive, but still wildly successful dinner party will be a piece of cake.

About the Author

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