

Wine, beer and cocktails may get a lot of play, but they aren't your only beverage options. Water (both sparkling and still), juices, spritzers, punch, cider, and hot or iced coffee and tea should round out your repertoire.

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It's customary to serve water, either still or sparkling, with lunch or dinner. Use tap or bottled water depending on your water quality. You don't have to go with a fancy, imported variety either -- sparkling water produced locally may not have the same cachet as imported, but it's easier on the pocketbook and on the carbon footprint.

Juices

Fruit or tomato juices are traditionally served at breakfast and brunch. Go for fresh-squeezed juice whenever you can. There's a rainbow of color and flavor out there: pomegranate, cranberry, orange, mango, guava, papaya, apple, pineapple, grape, and grapefruit, to name a few.

Spritzers

Even the name sounds fun! Mix fruit juice or syrups with sparkling water for a refreshing pick-me-up.

Mulled cider

Hot spiced cider will quickly warm up your fall or winter parties. Make your own spice mix (cloves, allspice, cinnamon, nutmeg, and orange peel are a nice combination) and invest in a super-sized tea ball for steeping.

Lemonade and iced tea

In the summer, big pitchers of lemonade, iced tea, or Southern-style sweet tea are front and center at all of our parties. Homemade is best, and honey adds a different kind of sweet. Some guest like to make an Arnold Palmer -- half lemonade, half iced tea -- while others make lemonade spritzers with sparkling water. Garnish with lemon slices and mint sprigs.

Coffee and tea

Whether hot or iced, coffee and tea are staples at every meal. Offering guests a cup of coffee or tea is a gesture of welcome the world over.

From [*Great Get-Togethers: Casual Gatherings and Elegant Parties at Home*](#) by Anna Post and Lizzie Post