

The holidays are here again! And with them comes the opportunity to entertain all those people who have entertained you throughout the year. Here are some tips on how to be a great holiday host.

The Operative Word: Early



Get invitations out *early*. During the holiday season, people's calendars fill up fast, so plan your guest list and send out your invitations four to six weeks before your party.

- Decorate *early*. There are always a zillion little tasks that need to happen the day of your party, and the day before it. If your house is decorated early, you'll have less stress and more time to enjoy the decorations.

- If you are planning to hire a caterer or order special foods, do it *early*. This is the busiest time for all businesses, and you want to be on their calendar first.

The Weeks Before Are About Planning

Eat, drink, and be merry!

- *Eat* – Plan something special. No one wants to eat the same old, same old that they eat every day at home. But don't experiment with weird foods. You want your guests to eat the delicious meal you've prepared, rather than shuffle it around their plates.

- *Drink* – Include a nice variety of beverages, including non-alcoholic choices, so there's something for everyone.

- *Be Merry* – Holiday music creates a festive atmosphere that can only enhance your special party. Spend some time putting together a holiday playlist.

Plan for unexpected guests. Have an extra serving or two of any item that requires per-person portioning. Be prepared to add a couple of extra place settings. If you have party favors, count for at least one or two more.

Party Time

Set up outdoor lighting: It's winter and the days are short. Turn the outdoor lights on. And if there's snow or ice, clear it away.

The most important tip: Greet every guest. Ask a friend or family member to be on hand to help out with other things, so you can be available to say "Happy Holidays" to each guest.