



## Tis' the Season to Gather A Brief Guide to Holiday Hosting

**A**s we enter the heart of the most festive month of the year, get-togethers and celebratory soirees are in full swing. And as anyone who is planning such a gathering knows, there's a lot that goes into planning a successful holiday party – whether it's a few cocktails over dinner with friends or a full evening of dining and entertainment with a dedicated mixologist.

Decking the halls can take a lot of preparation, but the bottom line is this: Don't let the planning turn an enjoyable occasion into a stressful event. Because even though there's a lot more than cocoa and cookies that goes into making a festive holiday party, there are ways to prepare that will leave you free to enjoy your guests – and to ensure they head home safely.

Here are some suggestions to keep in mind.

### Know How Much to Buy

Here's how to determine how much beer, wine or spirits to purchase:

- **Determine the number of guests that will be attending.** Take that number and multiply it by the number of hours the party will last. This determines the number of servings. For example, a party of 20 people lasting three hours would require about 60 servings.

### Know When to Ask for Help

If you expect fewer than 20 guests, you may be able to act as host and spend time with visitors. With more than 25 guests, however, it may be time to think about hiring or designating a dedicated bartender – someone who can meet guests' needs while watching out for the safety of everyone in attendance.

### Pre-Mix

Know when it's time to roll up your sleeves and when to rely on convenience.

- **Consider pre-mixed, holiday-themed cocktails.** Prepare them ahead of time in a pitcher, ready to serve, and you'll save time at the bar. Be sure to have ice on-hand to chill drinks.
- A 'do it yourself' bar can give your guests a chance to get creative. Set out the necessary elements ahead of time: glasses, ice, a selection of mixers and an assortment of spirits.

### Be a Responsible Host

Part of your responsibility as a host is not only entertaining guests, but ensuring they have a safe night.

- **Know who's driving.** Make sure designated drivers have plenty of non-alcoholic drinks.

Encourage guests to carpool with a designated driver and have a list of taxis available or assist guests with a car sharing app like Uber or Lyft. If someone doesn't have a way home, offer to let them stay the night.

- **Serve more than finger food.** Offer your guests food such as cheese, nuts and meat, which slow the alcohol's absorption rate.
- **Offer plenty of non-alcoholic options.** Serve alternative beverages such as virgin cocktails, juice, soda and water.
- **Obey the law.** Check I.D. on anyone you don't know at your gathering. Never serve alcohol to anyone who's under 21 or already intoxicated.
- **Designate a bartender.** Choose someone who can mix drinks with proper proportions and keep an eye on guests. Know the signs of impairment, which can include a lack of coordination, aggressive behavior, being talkative or indifferent, and exhibiting slurred or incoherent speech.
- **Wind things down.** Consider closing the bar an hour before the party's end.

Follow these suggestions and you'll ensure your get-together is as merry and bright as the holiday season itself. 🍹