

*Easy  
Party  
Planning*

*A supplement to*

**Secret Confessions of a Clean Freak**

## Easy Party Planning

Worried about your party being a bummer? Relax. With the right planning, it's a cinch. This is a great way to practice your new planning skills.

Ideally, Start one month ahead. The tasks can be condensed if you have less time.

- Plan the menu and activities.
  - Send invitations. Give plenty of notice if you want people to actually show up.
- Order any online supplies.

Oriental Trading is a great place to get your party supplies. No matter whether it's a holiday party, a luau, a birthday party, a company picnic, or a fund raising event. You can get all kinds of stuff to make your party a great hit. I used them one year to plan the kids activities for a company picnic. All of the kids got fun stuff to go home with. The catalog is a great party planning tool too.

### 2 weeks ahead

\* Buy paper goods, (if you didn't already order them online) and dry goods (all the stuff that won't spoil).

\* Check guest count

Plan foods that can either be made ahead, or are quick to cook. A lot of people think that barbecues are easy entertaining choices. Well, unless you have someone who is willing to stand at the grill for an hour or so. I think they're a real pain if you're cooking for more than 5 or 6 people. I like to plan food that you put it out and you're done rather than something you have to keep standing over. But that's just me.

You can still plan a summery meal without the hassles of grilling. Teriyaki chicken breasts is a good one. With cut up fresh pineapple, melon, and other fruits, broccoli salad, sliced tomatoes, potato salad, baked beans, coleslaw, carrot and raisin salad (add pineapple for a tropical taste), I mean, there is a ton of stuff. All of the sides can be made ahead, and all you have to do is cook the chicken which is really quick. And it's not the same stuff they get every where else!

Sweet and sour meatballs is another favorite. Just keep them warm in a crock pot. For a winter party - chili is a great choice. Serve with a variety of toppings so everyone can create their own taste sensation. Or Fajitas are fun too.

There are a lot of different things you can do to make entertaining easier and more fun. Just get creative! It doesn't have to be gourmet. People really do like simple good tasting food. Let the natural flavor of the food come through.

Another thing that was a surprising success was setting up a salad bar.

At an outdoor party, I set up a taco bar. That was a big success too. I also had chips and salsa, veggies and dip and fruit. That's it.

Another time saver - have people bring a dish. I always have people willing to make desserts. Whenever someone says, "What do you want me to bring?" Never ever say "oh nothing..." If you had all the time in the world, you wouldn't be reading this report now would you? :)

And there should always be at least one sort of event. Whether it's watching a football game, or a costume contest, or swimming, or charades, there should be something to do to break things up.

Again, get creative. Even Bozo buckets can be fun, even for adults. Hula hoops, UNO, water balloons, and many other things can be fun. Sometimes it becomes a tradition that everyone looks forward to. A lot of families play penny poker at the holidays.

Don't think gourmet and stuffy. People will get bored. Think relaxed and fun and your parties will be a hit.

So let's start flexing your planning muscles!

### **One week before -**

Get the house cleaned up so all it needs is a touch up cleaning right before the party. If you might have overnight guests - it happens sometimes - make sure you have plenty of clean sheets and towels.

If you're having any sort of swimming, make sure you have plenty of clean towels!

Get the rest of the shopping done. If you might have overnight guests, it's nice to have extra toothbrushes and stuff like that on hand. It's also a good idea to have band-aids, first aid cream, acetaminophen, upset stomach stuff, and general things like that on hand. You never know what weird things might pop up. Check your supplies.

### **2 days before -**

Take a final inventory. Have everything you need? Have stuff on hand for an impromptu breakfast if overnight guests are a real possibility.

### **1 day before -**

Quick touch up cleaning. If you're making desserts, most of them can be made ahead. Any jello molds should be made the night before. I like all of my food made fresh- so I don't start any of the cooking until the day of. But you can do the set up ahead of time. I wouldn't set the table just yet, but you can have the dishes out and cover them with a towel to keep them clean.

### **The day of the party -**

If you're using coolers, get enough ice. Start cutting up any fresh foods. Get meats in marinades. Make salads. Have all of your prep work done before guests are due to arrive. You kept your menu simple so there won't be that much to cook, right?

Get yourself dressed and go have fun!