

A Cocktail Party Planning Guide



The Fun Begins with Planning

If you're looking for an easy, inexpensive and fun way to entertain, why not give a cocktail party. Everyone, drinkers and non-drinkers alike, enjoys this popular form of entertainment. It's a great way to satisfy social and business obligations or just socialize with friends. And a cocktail party for a crowd or just a few can be equally successful. It just takes planning.

After you have decided on a date and time for your party, give careful consideration to the number of people you want to invite. Survey the space you have and decide how many your room will comfortably accommodate. For a stand-up crowd you need 5 to 6 square feet per person. If some of your guests will be seated, figure on 8 square feet per person. Guests who find themselves wedged against a wall or cramped into a corner are sure to pry themselves loose and make an early exit.

Invitations should be mailed at least 4 weeks in advance. This will give your guests time to make plans and to R.S.V.P. Guests also appreciate knowing what to wear, so a simple "casual" or "coat and tie" noted on the invitation will help.



Bar & Beverage Guide

Every cocktail party needs a well equipped bar. You will want to make sure you have the following:

- Cocktail Shaker, Bottle Opener and Water Pitcher
- Ice Cubes (5-7 per person) and Ice Bucket
- Cocktail Napkins (3-4 per person)
- Glasses - an attractive 8 oz stemmed glass or, if you are using paper, a standard 9 oz cup can be used for all beverages. Allow 1 1/2 – 2 glasses per person.

Helpful tips.....

Liquor: Plan on approximately two drinks per hour, per person. There are 21 to 28 drinks per quart of liquor. The most popular used liquors today are: Vodka, Wine, Scotch, Gin, Bourbon and Rum.

Mixers: figure 1 bottle per person and divide that amount equally between soda, ginger ale and tonic. If you plan on serving more exotic drinks maybe a Margarita Machine may be in order. Rental is reasonable and the assortment of mix drinks is impressive!

Wine and beer: Three to four drinks per person is sufficient for a four-hour party. One bottle of wine serves four to six guests. If a toast is in order, break out the bubbly!

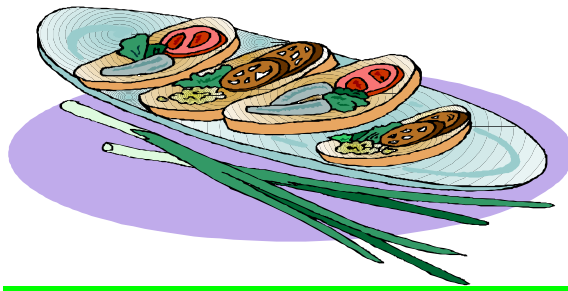
Champagne: 1 case (12 fifths) of Champagne serves 50 people (82 drinks).

Punch: 1 gallon of punch serves approximately 24 persons (32 - 3 oz. servings with ice).

Coffee: a one-pound can of coffee serves approximately 60 cups. Remember the condiments! A great tasting trick is to sprinkle a little cinnamon & squeeze a couple of wedges of orange into the grounds. Brew as you would normally.

Nonalcoholic options: Offer choices such as regular and diet soft drinks, bottled water, and lemonade. Plan on two nonalcoholic drinks per guest for the first hour and one for each subsequent hour.

Of course, these figures are approximations. Consider the weather—people drink more when it's warm outside.



Hors d' Oeuvre & More!

Literally translated, hors d'oeuvre means "outside the work," the work being the main course. In France, the hors d'oeuvre is usually a salad accompanied by a slice of sausage or pate'. What we call hors d'oeuvre are what the French call amuse-gueule or amuse bouche, "amusements for the mouth," and they range from the tidbits served before a meal to the main event of a cocktail party.

The amount of time you want to spend in the kitchen will determine the types of foods you serve at your party. A buffet of cold foods needs little attention while hot foods will require preparation & heating during the event. Chafing dishes are wonderful tools to keep foods hot but should be used with care so as not to damage the food. Consider a large Croc Pot for things like soups and meatballs. Rental items may make things easier on the pocketbook. Things like Chafers, Coffee Makers, Punch Bowls and even Margarita Machines are readily available to complete your party!

Cold foods should be chilled, but not served straight out of the refrigerator. Plan ahead by selecting recipes that can be prepared well in advance of the party. Arrange trays and refrigerate, have hot foods ready to heat. Decorate tables the night before. Having sufficient food is important, but that does not mean an unlimited variety. Don't cause your guests the discomfort of "confusion of the stomach!" The trick is to serve items that compliment each other or to vary a specific food theme. Use color, shape and texture for contrast.

For a brief cocktail party (1 to 2 hours) plan on serving four to five different items. Make them light and tantalizing for most guests will eat dinner later.

For a longer gathering (3 to 4 hours) plan on six hors d'oeuvres, with two to three additional items to be served midway to perk up people's tastebuds. You may choose not to count nuts and olives as hors d'oeuvre, or you may offer a variety of cheese pastries and count them as one item. Plan on preparing two to three of each appetizer per person.

Set up the bar as far from the food as possible. Otherwise, one small group will monopolize both food and drink. Another reason is to give people incentive to circulate. Place food next to the kitchen for ease in handling.



When to Get Help!

Doing it all yourself may be something you can brag about but will add years to your complexion! Consider hiring help when needed, whether it be family, college students hungry for extra money or local professional servers. Use this guideline to make your decision:

- When you are planning on more than 15 guests hire help to serve and clean up if possible.
- For more than 20 guests consider a bartender as well.
- One server, who is also preparing the food (heating, slicing and arranging), should be able to handle 20 persons.
- One bartender should be able to accommodate 40 to 60 guests.
- Have the help arrive at least two hours before the guests are due, and explain where things are located and what their duties are.

Handy Checklist

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| <input type="checkbox"/> Invitations | <input type="checkbox"/> Buffet Table Napkins |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Serving Bowls/Trays | <input type="checkbox"/> Table Decorations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cocktail Napkins | <input type="checkbox"/> Buffet Paper Plates |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Chafing Dishes | <input type="checkbox"/> Guests Favors |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cups and/or Glasses | <input type="checkbox"/> Buffet Cutlery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table covers | <input type="checkbox"/> Room Decorations |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Table Skirts | <input type="checkbox"/> Punch Bowl & Cups |