

Collect ables

Party Planning Checklist

Check Off Tasks in the First Minute!

This *Collectables Party Planning Checklist* will help you think about tasks that you may not have considered and may be pertinent. If they are not relevant, check them off !! - and know that you have carefully thought through your event.

The collections you own and plan to share with your guests are the basis for your design decisions. Enjoy planning your party as much as you enjoy designing your table, planning your menu or preparing the food! Try something new. Perhaps it will become a tradition.

Sections

Designing Your Party

Dining Details

Your Outrageous Checklist!

Spread it out!

More Outrageous Checklists!

Print out this checklist. Read through the list just to get an idea of what is on it. Then, decide on the collection you want to use for your centerpiece and some of the basics of your plan. Go through this list again and check off what is not relevant to your party. Some tasks are only relevant if you are having a large gathering, while others are suited to smaller dinner parties. There are tasks on these checklists you may never do. Check them off! Add tasks that are specific to your home or event. If you are new to hosting dinner parties, start small and grow into it. The goal is to fun at your own party!



Designing Your Party

Your Collection Tables Centerpiece

- Which of your collections are you going to use as a centerpiece?
- Choose pieces for the table that will keep the height of the centerpiece below 12 -15 inches depending on the density or visual weight of your collection pieces.
- Larger pieces of your collection can be set up on your buffet or around your home for guests to enjoy. If you will be setting up a children's table, use pieces from your collection that you are comfortable having around children. If you are unsure, opt for flowers.
- Place settings can be as simple as clear glass or white dishware. If you have family tableware that works with your collection – great. It adds another collection to the table to share with your guests.
- Will flowers be part of your design? Use unscented flowers.
- Are you using candles? Use unscented candles.

Dining Details

Initial Planning

- Decide on date, place and time. Do this early.
- Start your Master Calendar
- Invite an interesting mix of people. Number of guests: 4 to 8 is ideal for a dinner party. Think about your budget.
- Think elegance and ease.
- Will it be a sit-down dinner, a buffet, or a combination of both? Will there be 4 - 8 guests? Will it be a larger family or guest event? Will it be with or without children? Will it just be grazing stations where guests can sit at the dining table and around your home? Will it be a cocktail party or a dessert event?
- Contact a caterer, your children, family members or volunteers if you would like help. (start training early!) Ask for help with cleaning, creating a play list or whatever else would be helpful to you. Delegate whatever you can and try to make the planning a fun experience for everyone. Ask Mom to help cook!
- Would you like to host a Potluck? If so, ask guests to bring items that don't require refrigerator or oven space. For example, they could bring wine, a playlist or cheese and crackers. You could buy prepared foods. Maybe you just want to order takeout!
- If you are cooking, plan simple, tasty menus. Start with easy recipes you already know.
- Will there be a bar set up? This can be a large expense.



- If you are planning on ordering a flower arrangement, talk with your florist about colors, size and availability. Some flowers will have to be ordered. Are you going to create floral arrangements?
- Which rooms you would like to use to entertain your guests – living room, dining room, family room, basement, outdoors? What will your home accommodate?
- Start a party log book if you are so inclined. It will become a reference for future parties.
- Will you need rental supplies?

Table Setting and Decor

- What kind of dinner would you like to have? Is it a holiday or a special occasion?
- Will service be a buffet, plated and served, or will you pass food and have a food cart next to the host?
- Will it be formal or informal?
- Design your Collection tables centerpiece.
- Select plates, glasses, cutlery, flatware, napkins for the number of guests you are serving.
- Plan table linens – tablecloth (10-12 inch over hang), runner, placemats, none.
- Lay out a place setting (15 inches between place settings).
- Will you arrange seating and have place cards? Perhaps mix it up so that guests meet new people. The host usually sits closest to the kitchen.
- Continue, or start, traditions your family and guests will love.

Location

- Dining room, Kitchen, Patio. If outside, make plans to deal with bugs, rain, heat, neighbors, etc.
- Assess your furniture needs – rent if necessary.
- Be sure there is room for guests to walk around the table and chairs when other guests are seated.
- If you are planning cocktails and hors d'oeuvres, will you serve them outside, in the living room or the kitchen?
- Consider hiring roving servers and someone to handle heating and plating food.

Budget

- What do you want to spend?
- Look at the Outrageous Checklist sections and check off all the items that are not relevant to your plans.
- Go back though and estimate the cost for each item of your plan. Does it match your initial budget? Adjust as necessary.



Menu Planning

- Gather recipes and test new recipes beforehand. What meal do you cook most successfully? Plan light hors d'oeuvres, the main meal and dessert. Prepare as much ahead of time as possible.
- Use recipes you can freeze so they can be made ahead of time.
- If you are planning a buffet, consider what foods will hold up best and can sit out for a while. The food should still be attractive and taste good.
- If you are planning food stations with guests sitting in various locations, choose dishes that are not messy or hard to manipulate, like spaghetti or items that need a lot of cutting.
- Will hors d'oeuvres be in the living room and the main meal in the dining room?
- Choose drinks - alcoholic and non-alcoholic. Limit alcohol for safety reasons.
- Take Out and Deli foods are great supplements - call in advance.
- Estimate the amount of food needed - 1 ½ servings per person.
- Ask your guests about dietary restrictions
- Don't offer two foods that are heavy or very rich.
- Create Master shopping List. Will you need garnishes?
- Non-Perishables – purchase whenever you are out.
- Purchase perishables, including flowers, two days ahead.
- What cooking tools will you need?
- If you have one oven, avoid 2 dishes that need 2 ovens at different temperatures.
- Plan the drinks. Would you like a signature cocktail, mocktail, wine, beer, sodas, water, another beverage? White wine is nice if you are worried about spills.
- Think about refrigerator space and stove/oven capacity
- Do you want to purchase from a butcher?
- Review recipes and see what you already have in your pantry – salt, herbs etc.

Invitations

- Send invites out 2-3 weeks before your dinner party. You can make phone calls, use paper invitations or use Evites. Include RSVP date (RSVP by 10 days out).
- Invite guests who complement each other.
- Dress attire if appropriate. For example, a Halloween, New Year's or BBQ
- If paper invitation, design yourself or purchase.
- Include day, date, time, address, directions if needed, the title of event and ask for RSVP. Include your phone number or email.
- Inside or if outside include a reminder to bring a sweater or jacket.
- Who is hosting the party, if a special event? Include honorees name, if pertinent.
- Include info like formal/casual, cocktails only or dinner, birthday, etc.
- Ask about any dietary restrictions – adjust menu and shopping list as needed



Entertainment

- Will there be entertainment? Options include a piano player, harpist, mariachi, Santa Claus, card magicians, playlist or soundtracks.
- Contact entertainers for pricing and availability

Outrageous Checklists

I like to call all these lists **Outrageous Checklists** because I try to put as much on them as possible. I encourage you to add more. It is easy to cross tasks off. It is harder if you forget a needed task. These checklists provide further specific details related to budgeting, dining table settings, buffet setup, dessert, children's tables, bar, lighting, music, coat check, bathroom, and even bug control!

Budget Checklist

- All sections should be represented here.
- Food
- Caterers, if hired
- Drinks – Water, Wine, Beer, Hard Liquor.
- Toilet paper and facial tissue
- Rentals, if needed
- Disposable paper goods for Children's table, if needed.
- Extra serving platters, trays, baskets.
- Ice for drinks or buffet items.
- Coffee pot / supplies if necessary.
- Any Gifts / Treats / Favors.
- Music
- Paper Invitations, if used.
- Flowers, if part of your design. Do you want flowers placed in other rooms?
- Entertainment
- Candles, if needed.
- Hired help, if needed.
- Pad your budget - 10% (for the miscellaneous expenses that always come up).

Dining Table Checklist

- Candles, if part of the design.
- Place cards, if part of the design.
- Tablecloth or runner, unless leaving the surface bare. Clean, iron or dry-clean linens.
- Serving plates and utensils that have been cleaned.



- Napkins - clean, iron or dry-clean
- Table settings that have been cleaned.
- Flowers, if being used. Always use flowers that are not heavily scented.
- Glassware, cleaned.
- Trivets, if needed
- Individual, or several, salt and pepper shakers.
- Extra tables, if needed. Extra chairs, if needed.
- Silverware, cleaned.
- Carving board and carving knife, if needed.
- If you don't have enough of any element of your place settings chose a second design that complements the first and alternate them around the table.
- As guests arrive, have some kind of food on the table to make it look inviting. For example, a relish tray or chocolate in center of the salad plate or above place setting (make this your signature touch).

Buffet Checklist

- Any large pieces of your collection can be placed on your buffet.
- Flowers, if part of your design. Always use flowers that are not heavily scented.
- Consider pre-serving soups, salads and drinks.
- Pre-cut meats or have carver at station, if needed
- Runner or Tablecloth or exposed tabletop surface.
- Platters, trays and bowls, tiered servers, serving spoons, forks, tongs, empty saucers to put utensils, serving pieces for sauces.
- Assign a serving dish to each recipe and label with a sticky note.
- Lay out items in the order in which that will be collected – plates, main dishes, condiments and dressings, napkins, flatware, etc.
- Set up drinks on another table, if desired. (Use multiple card tables if not buffet).
- Food warmers
- Set up the flow of guests away from any traffic bottlenecks. Consider moving buffet away from wall so guests can go down each side large parties.
- Tip: Use tiered dishes on your buffet to create interest and provide more space.
- Focal point on wall behind buffet
- Carving board and carving knife, if needed.
- Table settings - unless guests will pick up their plates from the dining table and head to the buffet to load their plates!
- Keep serving pieces abundant with food until it is all gone!
- Food warmer, if needed

Dessert Set Up

- Use a separate table or area apart from the main course.



- Keep serving pieces abundant with food until it is all gone!
- Use a separate table or designated area for coffee / tea / water service.
- Offer cheese and fruit as an alternative to sweets.

Coffee / Tea Station

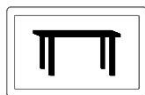
- Coffee, decaf
- Cream, sugar. Stirrer/spoons, napkins
- Small plate for used tea bags
- Coffee maker
- Tea bags

Children's Tables

- Table and chairs.
- Put some kind of food on the table to make it look inviting. For example, a Relish tray or a piece of chocolate in the center of the salad plate or above the place setting. (again, make this your signature).
- Tablecloth, runner if not leaving table exposed.
- Tableware
- Glassware
- Silverware
- Napkins
- Candles, if part of design (age dependent).
- Place cards, if being used.
- Serving plates and utensils if serving family style.
- Flowers, if part of design. Always use flowers that are not heavily scented.
- Trivets, if needed

Bar Checklist

- Have cocktails outside the dining area.
- Be a responsible host – limit alcoholic drinks.
- Keep people busy with activities and offer non-salty appetizers.
- Plan to close bar 90 minutes before the end of the event.
- Offer coffee, tea, sodas
- Call taxi, Uber or designate a driver. Have phone numbers handy in case your guests should not drive.
- Barware
- Beer, liquor and mixers, red and/or white wine. White will not stain if spilled. Have a spill kit with club soda and salt.
- Have a non-alcoholic choice.
- Bottle opener



- Cocktail napkins
- Dry towels
- Ice
- Beverage tub
- Have water available. Use pitchers or water bottles
- Have extra glasses available or a way to identify your guest's glasses.

Lighting

- How will table and room(s) be lit? Very important for ambiance.
- Do light check early and day of party.
- Fireplace wood
- Candles
- Extra room lighting.
- Use dimmers.
- Decorate room or windows with twinkle lights or other specialty lights
- Consider up-lights for setting the mood.

Music

- Playlist. Pick your music.
- Think about speaker placement.
- See Entertainment section.
- Play music on low.

Coat Check

- If appropriate – closet or bedroom.
- Plenty of space and hangers.
- Place for hats, umbrellas.

If Smoking guests

- Offer guests an outdoor space with ash trays.

Bathroom Checklist

- Paper hand towels
- Clean top to bottom. Guests really want clean bathrooms.
- Put away all personal items and any medications the day of the party.
- Extra toilet paper.
- Get rid of any smells / ventilate
- Empty trash
- Liquid soap in pump bottle



Outdoor Bugs

- Mosquitos, wasps, flies > Citronella, picnic domes, traps

Spread Tasks Out!

The Timetable

4 Weeks Ahead

- Plan out your Collection Tables centerpiece.
- List tasks and who is responsible for each task.
- Confirm any vendors – prepare for any tips, payments etc. Students or professional pre-party cleaning, post party cleaning, passing appetizers, replenishing buffet.
- Place any food orders needed.
- Line up any help you may need.
- Clean grill if necessary.
- Lighting for the front door.
- Decorations for the fireplace mantel (a place for more pieces of your collection).
- Create the lighting for the right mood.
- Plan out all areas where you will be serving food and drinks.
- Plan out the schedule for the event, however be flexible – they are only guidelines!
- Polish any silver

3 Weeks Ahead

- Invitation list. Send Invitations > paper, calls or email.
- Plan the menu - recipes, food to be prepared ahead, shopping list.
- Find out about any food allergies.
- Plan for a rainy, snowy, windy or unusually hot day.
- Pick out clothes you will wear.

2 Weeks Ahead

- Touch base with any vendors.
- Clean crystal, dishware and silverware.
- Launder and iron linens.
- Come up with your playlist.
- Clean out your refrigerator so you have room for more food!
- Do first round of shopping and cooking.
- Sharpen knives.
- Take inventory of cookware and serving dishes.



1 Week Ahead

- Decide on seating plan, if needed.
- Clean the house.
- Confirm Vendors.
- Arrange furniture as needed. Think about traffic flow.
- Designate a Beverage area.
- Designate a Dessert table.
- Set up your Collection Tables centerpiece.
- Put away valuable items, if concerned.
- Stock the bar.
- Create a cleanup box for any spills - rags, wine cleaner, club soda, etc.
- Specify a place for coats.
- Grocery shopping for make ahead dishes.
- Wood for fireplace.
- Yard Checklist - Clean up leaves, Weed.
- Confirm RSVP's – how many guests will be attending?

3 Days Ahead

- Notify the neighbors, if necessary.
- Check the medicine cabinet. Put away anything you don't want guests to see.
- Clean areas of the house that guests will use so you just need to touch up the morning of the party.
- Pay special attention to the bathroom. Set out paper hand towels and restock toilet paper.
- Assign serving dishes and utensils to each recipe with a sticky note

Two Days Ahead

- Set the table.
- Place buffet items in a logical serving sequence.
- Finish cleaning.
- Buy any flowers, harden if necessary.
- One to two days ahead, prepare any food that can be made in advance.

One Day Ahead

- Purchase any bags of ice needed.
- Arrange flowers.

- Make a checklist by time for the day of the party.
- Shop for fresh ingredients.



- Prep vegetables, meat or other items that can be done in advance.
- Place out extra glasses or have a way for guests to identify their glasses.
- Pull out frozen foods early enough to thaw
- Bring wines to their correct temperature
- Put away breakable items or items in your home you are concerned about, especially if children will be attending.

Party Day

- Do a final walk through the house and tidy up.
- Touch up table settings, centerpiece, flowers.
- Touch up the bathrooms.
- Put away all personal items and any medications the day of the party.
- Prepare as much food in the morning as possible.
- Chill wine and other drinks. Open red wines to 'breathe'
- Prepare drink garnishes.
- Pre-measure coffee so it is ready to brew.
- Run the dishwasher and empty it.
- Finish cooking.
- Adjust lighting as needed – fireplace, candles, dimmers.
- Set up audio equipment and ready the playlist.
- Plate appetizers.
- Offer drinks early
- Fill ice buckets
- Adjust central heating or cooling
- Remember to pre-heat the oven
- Pull out frozen foods early enough to thaw
- Allow time to get yourself ready
- Take a break!

Hosting

- Greet guests personally. Greet guests at door and take coats.
- Offer a drink.
- Serve appetizers.
- Make introduction if guests don't know each other.
- Guide guests to their seats once dinner is ready. Allow about one hour between guests arriving and dinner begins.
- Notice if the room gets too hot or cold.
- Try to have kitchen fairly cleaned up as you serve each course

- Check baths periodically



After Dinner

- Remove ice cream to soften
- Serve dessert
- Share more stories, games.
- Clear the table gradually to avoid rushing the end of the party.
- Post Party, thank your guests as they leave or with a follow up message.
- Tidy up.
- Store leftovers.
- Relax.

More Outrageous Checklists

Friends, Family, Neighborhood Kids Help Checklist

- List tasks, such as cleaning up the site the day before the event, setting up the buffet, table tops, arrangement of table and chairs, pick up food from caterers, serving, washing dishes, or cleanup. Choose people you know are reliable.
- If family, start training early!
- Who is responsible for each task. Neighborhood kids can be servers and help with set up and cleanup. Try them out with a family event, like a birthday or BBQ, and see how they work out. Decide on their function at the party.
- Family and friends may work for free, but offer to pay them. Perhaps use minimum wage rates.
- Pay neighborhood kids. Perhaps use the going rate for babysitting or the minimum wage as a guide.

House Cleaning

- List tasks, who is responsible for each and on what day.
- Dishes: Wash or load into the dishwasher.
- Wipe kitchen counters
- Tidy living areas: Pick up clutter, fold blankets, arrange pillows.
- Take out trash: Empty kitchen and bathroom trash bins as needed.
- Sweep/vacuum high-traffic areas: Focus on entryways, kitchen, and living room
- Dust surfaces: Wipe down furniture, shelves, and electronics.
- Vacuum/mop floors: Focus on kitchen, dining areas, bathrooms.
- Clean mirrors and glass: Wipe down mirrors and any glass surfaces.
- Bathroom: Clean toilets, sinks, and countertops. Scrub shower/tub. Wipe down bathroom tiles.

- Kitchen: Wipe down cabinets and appliances (including microwave). Clean stovetop and oven (if needed). Clean inside fridge (check for expired food).
- Laundry: Wash, dry, fold, and put away clothes and linens.



- Deep clean appliances: Clean inside the oven, microwave, dishwasher, and fridge.
- Dust ceiling fans, vents, and light fixtures.
- Wipe baseboards.
- Vacuum furniture: Focus on couches and chairs
- Make beds

Yard Maintenance

- List tasks and who is responsible for each and on what day.
- Mow the lawn: Keep grass at a healthy height.
- Water plants and lawn: Adjust watering schedule based on season and weather conditions.
- Weed flower beds and lawn: Remove weeds to keep plants healthy.
- Trim edges: Use a trimmer to clean up around walkways, driveways, and garden beds.
- Sweep/blow hard surfaces: Clean leaves and debris off patios, sidewalks, and driveways.
- Empty outdoor trash bins: Check for any trash or debris in your yard.
- Prune shrubs and bushes: Remove dead or overgrown branches to maintain shape and health.
- Rake leaves.
- Inspect and repair fences or gates: Check for damage and make any necessary repairs.
- Clean outdoor furniture: Wipe down or hose off patio chairs, tables, and cushions.
- Plant flowers, shrubs, or trees: Spring is the ideal time for planting.
- Check for pests: Watch for early signs of pests or disease on plants.
- Cut back perennials: Trim back overgrown plants to encourage health and blooming.
- Shovel snow and clear walkways. Prevent ice buildup on driveways and paths.
- Inspect trees: Check for weak branches that could break under snow or wind.

Caterers Checklist

- If you decide to use caterers, speak with them early in the planning about what they can and **cannot** do for you.
- Get 3 references from clients who had a similar event within the past year. Choose people you have learned are reliable.
- Delineate tasks carefully and communicate well.
- Be specific.

- Have them repeat back critical instructions.
- How many years have they been in business?
- Decide if you are planning on picking up the food yourself, have it delivered or have the caterers cook and serve at your home.
- Are they insured with a liability policy?



- What types of events do they typically cater?
- What are their professional affiliations?
- Do they have references or customer reviews you can see?
- Do they have pictures of parties they have catered?
- How far in advance do I need to reserve a date?
- Are they available for my event date?
- Will they help with the amount of food needed for the number of expected guests and the projected cost?
- How soon do they need food orders? (Follow up 1 week before and again 2 days before. Make sure everything is on track)
- When do they need a final count?
- What are their pricing details, including delivery, setup, and pickup fees?
- Do they require a deposit? If so, how much and when is it due?
- What is the fee schedule?
- When is the full payment due?
- Withhold final payment until all is done.
- Do they offer any discounts for early bookings, large orders, or repeat customers?
- Do they handle delivery and setup, and what is the cost?
- When will they deliver and pick up the items?
- How much time will they need to set up everything?
- What happens if delivery is delayed?
- What is their policy on damaged, lost, or stolen items?
- What happens if an item unusable upon delivery?
- What if there is an equipment breakdown.
- What if an employee is sick?
- What is their policy on last-minute changes or additions?
- How long before the event can I cancel without penalty?
- Do they offer event insurance or recommend it?
- Do they provide event planning or coordination services?
- Can they work with my event coordinator or planner?
- Do they offer custom items or special requests?
- Will someone be available during the event in case issues arise?
- Can I make changes to the order after booking?
- Do they require a site visit to evaluate the venue for setup?

- Do their employees wear uniforms?

Activities Checklist

- List tasks and who is responsible for each.
- Select and finalize games or activities (age-appropriate)
- Hire entertainers (if necessary: DJ, magician, etc.)



- Organize music playlists or live performances
- Purchase materials for games or activities (prizes, props, etc.)
- Get any additional items (craft supplies, outdoor equipment)
- Check availability of necessary electronics (projectors, speakers)
- Organize any party favors
- Recruit helpers for different activities
- Assign an activities coordinator (set-up, activity stations, cleanup)
- Set up activity stations or designated game areas
- Test audio/visual equipment
- Lay out prizes or craft supplies
- Announce and lead games/activities
- Keep a flexible schedule to accommodate guest energy and interest levels
- Ensure smooth transitions between activities
- Distribute prizes or awards
- Keep track of time to avoid rushing or lagging
- Ensure safety and avoid overcrowding at certain activities
- Announce final games or activities
- Thank guests for attending
- Hand out any remaining favors or gifts
- Dismantle activity stations
- Collect supplies and prizes
- Ensure venue is clean and returned to its original state

Rental Checklist

- Call at least three rental companies for information.
- Speak with companies early in the planning about what they can and **cannot** do for you.
- Delineate tasks carefully and communicate well.
- Have them repeat back critical instructions or requests.
- Be specific.
- Will they help you with the amount of equipment needed for the number of expected guests and the projected cost.
- Are they insured with a liability policy?
- How long have they been in the party rental business?

- What types of events do they typically cater to?
- Do they have references or customer reviews I can see?
- What items do they have available for rent?
- Do they have a catalog or pictures of your rental inventory?
- Can you choose different colors, styles, or sizes for items like linens, chairs, or dinnerware?



- Do they offer package deals or discounts for bundling multiple items?
- Are the items I'm interested in available for my event date?
- How far in advance do I need to reserve items?
- What is their policy on last-minute changes or additions?
- Do they handle delivery and setup, and what is the cost?
- When will they deliver and pick up the items?
- How much time will they need to set up everything?
- What happens if delivery is delayed?
- What are your pricing details, including delivery, setup, and pickup fees?
- Do they require a deposit? If so, how much and when is it due?
- When is the full payment due?
- What is their cancellation policy?
- Do they offer any discounts for early bookings, large orders, or repeat customers?
- What is their policy on damaged, lost, or stolen items?
- Do they offer event insurance or recommend it?
- What happens if an item is broken or unusable upon delivery?
- Do they provide event planning or coordination services?
- Can they work with my event coordinator or planner?
- Do they offer custom items or special requests?
- Will someone be available during the event in case issues arise?
- Can I make changes to the order after booking?
- Do they require a site visit to evaluate the venue for setup?

Links

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Table_setting

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Centrepiece>

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Floral_design

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Menu>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Recipe>

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tableware>