

Stress-Free Tips for Entertaining This Holiday Season

Whether you are the ultimate party planner or you're simply the go-to house for holiday gatherings because no one else volunteers to host, it IS possible to have a stress-free get-together. Follow these suggestions and ideas on how to have a memorable gathering, without the added stress that typically comes with planning and hosting a party.



Plan. This is vital to not running errands the day before (or hours) before your gathering and being exhausted before your guests even arrive. At least a few weeks before your event, plan the menu and any details regarding special decorations you may want. Consider asking attendees to bring some of their favorite decorations that they might not be using at home this year.

Choose make-ahead food dishes. By choosing foods you can make ahead of time, you can enjoy your guests while not having to mind the food. This means you reap the benefits of a memory together, too! Consider using kitchen tools to streamline the process. Try a warmer or slow-cooker, or a mix

of refrigerated foods that will allow little prep on the day of your gathering.

Shop early. This goes hand in hand with planning ahead. You don't want to arrive at the grocery store at the last minute only to discover that the specific items you need are out of stock. Find items you can easily freeze.

Enlist help. Yes, this means asking your loved ones to bring a dish to pass. Consider posting a tentative menu and ask for guests to bring some of the listed dishes. Enlisting help also means asking those you live with to help tidy and clean the house. If you live independently, have helping hands come clean with you the day

before and offer to share a meal together as a repayment for their kindness.

Simplify dishware and silverware. Consider using disposable plates, utensils, cups and napkins so there's less cleanup at the end of the gathering. Having disposable containers on-hand can be helpful if you tend to have leftovers that you offer your guests to take with them. It's a nice way to say thank you for the time well-spent together! This also helps reduce food waste, and your guests will appreciate the extra food around the busy holiday season.

"Easy Holiday Entertaining Tips for a Stress-Less Holiday Season," healthyfamilyproject.com, accessed Nov. 12, 2023.

"5 Easy Tips for The Holiday Season," tinybeans.com, accessed Nov. 12, 2023.



FUN WAYS TO MAKE THE HOLIDAYS MEMORABLE



Science supports the idea that leisure activities and play connect to whole-person wellbeing: In many indirect ways, joyful and playful leisure experiences support overall emotional, mental, physical, social, and even financial wellbeing.

These experiences can reduce stress and improve our ability to cope with life challenges; support social connections, build social networks and enhance a sense of belonging; help us recharge and rejuvenate to prevent burnout; enhance creativity, problem-solving skills and overall cognitive function; boost immune function, improve sleep and reduce overall risk for illness.

Whether you're hosting this season or looking to attend your next gathering with a few creative ideas in your back pocket, check out these fun ways to celebrate the holidays!

SANTA-BEARD CONTEST

No facial hair required! Challenge loved ones to create their own Santa beard on their faces with shaving cream without using a mirror. Once done, snap some photos and vote with secret ballots! Have a prize or gift for the winner and some towels for cleanup on-hand!

WRAPPING RELAY

See which team can wrap the fastest, neatest or most elegant gift in a designated time. Make it challenging by requiring that one arm remain behind the back! For the actual gifts in the box, consider choosing a family or organization you'll donate to and further enhance the overall value of your time spent together!

GINGERBREAD HOUSE-HUNTERS COMPETITION

See who (or what team) can create the most show-stopping gingerbread home! Start with pre-built kits to minimize mess and focus on creativity. Consider setting a timer and have an anonymous vote with a prize winner after.

THE HOLIDAY BOX GAME

Wearing oven mitts, challenge participants to take turns unwrapping a giant box (with boxes wrapped within boxes!). The player behind them rolls two dice until they hit doubles – requiring the person unwrapping to stop and pass the oven mitts forward. Whomever reaches

the inside of the final box gets a prize of your choosing (cash, lotto tickets, anything that won't break when jostled around during the game!).

SANTA HAT FOLLOW-THE-LEADER

Either provide a Santa hat for all guests or request them to wear one to your gathering. From the start, designate one secret guest to be "the leader" – they will remove their hat stealthily during the party. Once this person removes their hat, it's up to all other guests to notice and follow suit. The last guest wearing a hat loses. You might have a little challenge for them to keep the fun going!

BLINDFOLDED CRAFTING

See who can come the closest to crafting a recognizable holiday character with their eyes covered by a winter scarf or soft material! Grab a couple inexpensive kid's craft kits (for simplicity) or have guests draw on paper. Have a treat for the winner!

ORNAMENT RAFFLE

Ask guests to guess how many ornaments are hanging on your holiday tree. The closest to the true number wins a prize or gift of your choosing! We wish you and your loved ones a happy and healthy holiday season!

*27 Fun Adult-Friendly Christmas Games Perfect for Any Holiday Party," Annie O'Sullivan and Marissa Lascala, goodhousekeeping.com, Oct. 10, 2023.

*50 Best Christmas Party Ideas to Celebrate the Happiest Season of All," Erin Cavoto, thehappiestwoman.com, Aug. 29, 2023.



Preparation: 5 minutes
Refrigeration: 3-4 hours or overnight

- ¼ cup chia seeds
- 1 cup almond milk (or any milk of choice)
- ¼ cup pomegranate seeds
- 1 sliced kiwi
- 2 tablespoons slivered almonds

1. In a bowl or jar, combine the chia seeds and milk. Stir well to prevent clumping.
2. Cover the mixture and refrigerate it for at least 3 to 4 hours, or overnight. This allows the chia seeds to absorb liquid and create a pudding-like consistency. You may want to stir the mixture a couple of times during the first hour to avoid clumping.
3. Once the chia pudding has thickened, remove it from the refrigerator.
4. To serve, layer the chia pudding with the following toppings:
 - Sprinkle pomegranate seeds on top for a burst of red color and a sweet-tart flavor.
 - Arrange sliced kiwi on top for a refreshing green element and a tropical touch.
 - Finally, sprinkle slivered almonds for added texture and a nutty flavor.
5. Enjoy your holiday chia pudding as a nutritious and festive treat!

Nutrition Facts (approximate for one serving):
Calories: 200, Protein: 7g, Fat: 10g, Carbohydrates: 20g,
Fiber: 10g, Sugar: 5g

These numbers can vary based on the specific quantities of ingredients used and the brands of almond milk or other ingredients selected.

Recipe adapted from thewholesmiths.com

