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## Throwing a Great Holiday Party

By JULIE PRYOR

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The holidays are just around the corner, which means entertaining at home. Whether you are hosting an intimate family gathering or a party for 300 guests, here are some tips to ensure your party is a success.

- Choose unique and fun invitations that get your guests excited about your party.
- Ask guests to bring an unwrapped toy to donate.
- Send your neighbors a note with your party details. Let them know what time the party will end. It's nice to invite your neighbors to the party, or at least ask them to stop by for a drink.
- Great food is critical. Make sure waiters circulate with wonderful hors d'oeuvres. They should be bite-sized and easy to eat.
- Be creative. Serve an assortment of hot soup in shot glasses; sweet potato fries in paper cones; ceramic spoons filled with macaroni and cheese; Caesar salad on romaine spears; and roasted turkey with stuffing on a stick.
- Comfort food is especially popular during the holidays. Think mini potpies with piping hot fillings; biscuits topped with fried chicken and gravy; potato latkes; Beef Wellington; and prime rib and Yorkshire pudding.



*Julie Pryor*

- Stations offering a variation of one food can be a lot of fun. Guests were delighted with the grilled cheese station at a recent party I planned.
- Alert your caterer to any known allergies your guests may have. Make sure to have vegetarian and gluten free options available.
- View your home's curb appeal the week before your party. If your door needs repainting or your garden is looking drab, make the changes a few days before the party. I will never forget my client who decided to have her front

door painted the day of her party!

- Make sure to have a tent on hold and order plenty of heaters if your celebration will be outdoors. Cold guests are not happy guests.
- Stock bathrooms with hand towels, liquid soap in a holiday scent, extra toilet paper and vases of fragrant flowers.
- Keep music at a comfortable level so that guests can talk—especially during dinner. Give your band or DJ a playlist of your favorite songs ahead of time. Be sure to include a few holiday favorites.
- In addition to other beverages, serve

one festive signature drink in a gorgeous glass. Mixing in cranberry juice or pomegranate juice will add a nice touch of holiday red.

- Lighting is an important element to the overall feel of your party. Candles are great, but for real impact think about hiring a professional lighting company. Consider projecting tiny snowflakes onto a driveway or a dance floor, and “Happy Holidays” onto an exterior wall or the driveway as guests depart.
- Place flowers in unique vessels with berries and textured greens on mantles and tables.
- Cap off the evening with a “wow” factor such as a grand entrance by the USC Trojan Marching Band. Place thoughtful favors along with a note thanking guests for attending on each guest's car dashboard.
- Serve hot chocolate or spiced apple cider to guests waiting for their cars. Make sure to place a heater in this area as well.
- If anyone drinks too much, call a cab.
- Enjoy the evening. Your guests will follow your lead.

*Julie Pryor has been planning corporate and social events and weddings in Pacific Palisades and around the world for 17 years. For more information, call Pryor Events at (310) 478-1767 or visit [pryorevents.com](http://pryorevents.com).*