

RANDOM HOUSE  BOOKS



How To Be The Perfect Housewife: Entertain in Style

Anthea Turner

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About the Book

Discover the secrets of impeccable entertaining and make your parties *the* hottest ticket in town.

Entertaining can be a headache. All that preparation and planning, budgeting, shopping and inviting ... and that's before your guests have even arrived!

Luckily, Perfect Housewife, Anthea Turner, is on hand to take the stress out of entertaining. Whether you're planning a formal dinner or a delicious buffet, a sophisticated picnic or a kids' Halloween party, a themed birthday or a summer barbeque, you'll find all the tips you need to organise fabulous functions - without the fear.

Learn the art of preparation, sending invitations, devising menus, drinks and themes. Feel confident tackling any kind of celebration, whatever your budget.

Entertain in Style - the follow-up to the successful *How to Be the Perfect Housewife* and tie-in to the hit TV series *Anthea Turner: Perfect Housewife* - has all the helpful hints and inspiring ideas you need to create an exceptional event with ease, enjoyment and flawless style.

How To Be The
Perfect Housewife

Entertain in Style

Anthea Turner



To Kate Waters, who taught me how to dress a
salmon

INTRODUCTION

Parties, parties, parties ... How we love to attend them, but arranging them ourselves? Phew! For some, social gatherings, however small, are a nightmare of gigantic proportions. For others - 'The Party Professionals' - they're a joy.

The key to this golden chalice of home making is enthusiasm, organisation and preparation. In this book I hope to give you all the help and encouragement I can, without actually turning up on your doorstep and doing it for you.

It's people who make a home - those who live in it and those who visit. I'm sure, like me, you have been to houses that are shining examples of co-ordination, design and cleanliness but for some reason feel unwelcoming. There are many reasons for this, but the most common is unhappy, uptight, unsociable occupants. What makes a house a home has nothing to do with money; a real home is one whose doors are open to friends dropping in for anything from a simple cup of coffee to a full-blown dinner party.

Like many things in life, what you put into your home you get back ten fold. I love to hear my house ringing with the voices of friends, but I'm happy to admit that things don't always go to plan. Summer barbecues have been a wash out, the oven has packed in as I'm about to roast a beautifully prepared fillet, ornaments have been broken, and children and animals have done what only they do best, but over the years I've learnt to cope with all sorts of social situations and to this day I still relish learning from others.

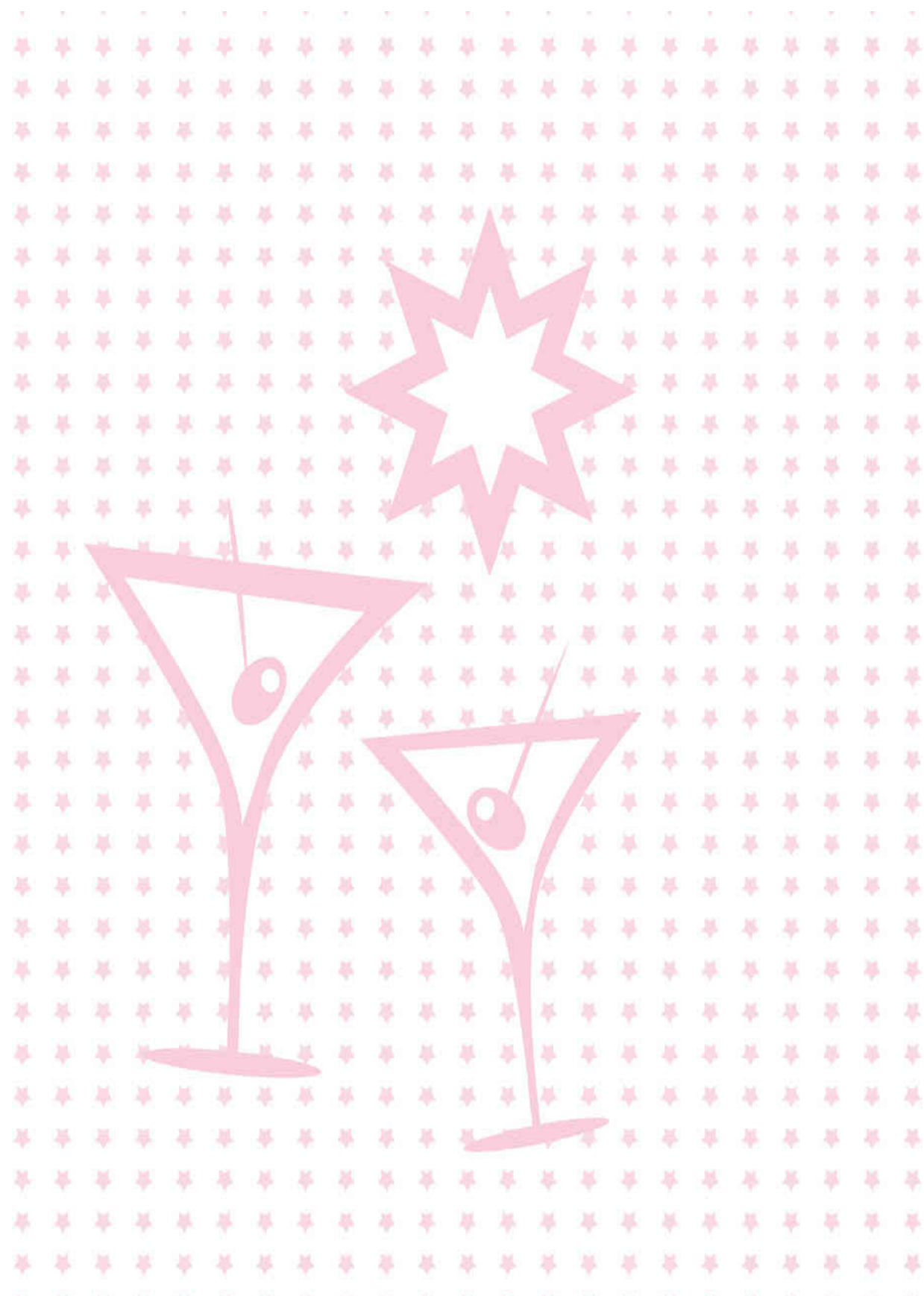
I'm not a cook, but I'm extremely competent with a few good books (I've listed some of my favourites at the end of this one). I'm not an interior designer, but I am an accomplished home maker. And I'm not a professional party

planner but, since 1978 when, with two other friends, I arranged the St Dominic's Grammar School for Girls end-of-term dance (it was a blast), I have always put my best foot forward when it comes to entertaining.

Not everything in this book will be for you, but I hope that, when faced with a party, my trusty commonsense entertaining tips will be your saving grace.

With love

Adrian Turner x



CHAPTER 1

PARTY PREPARATION



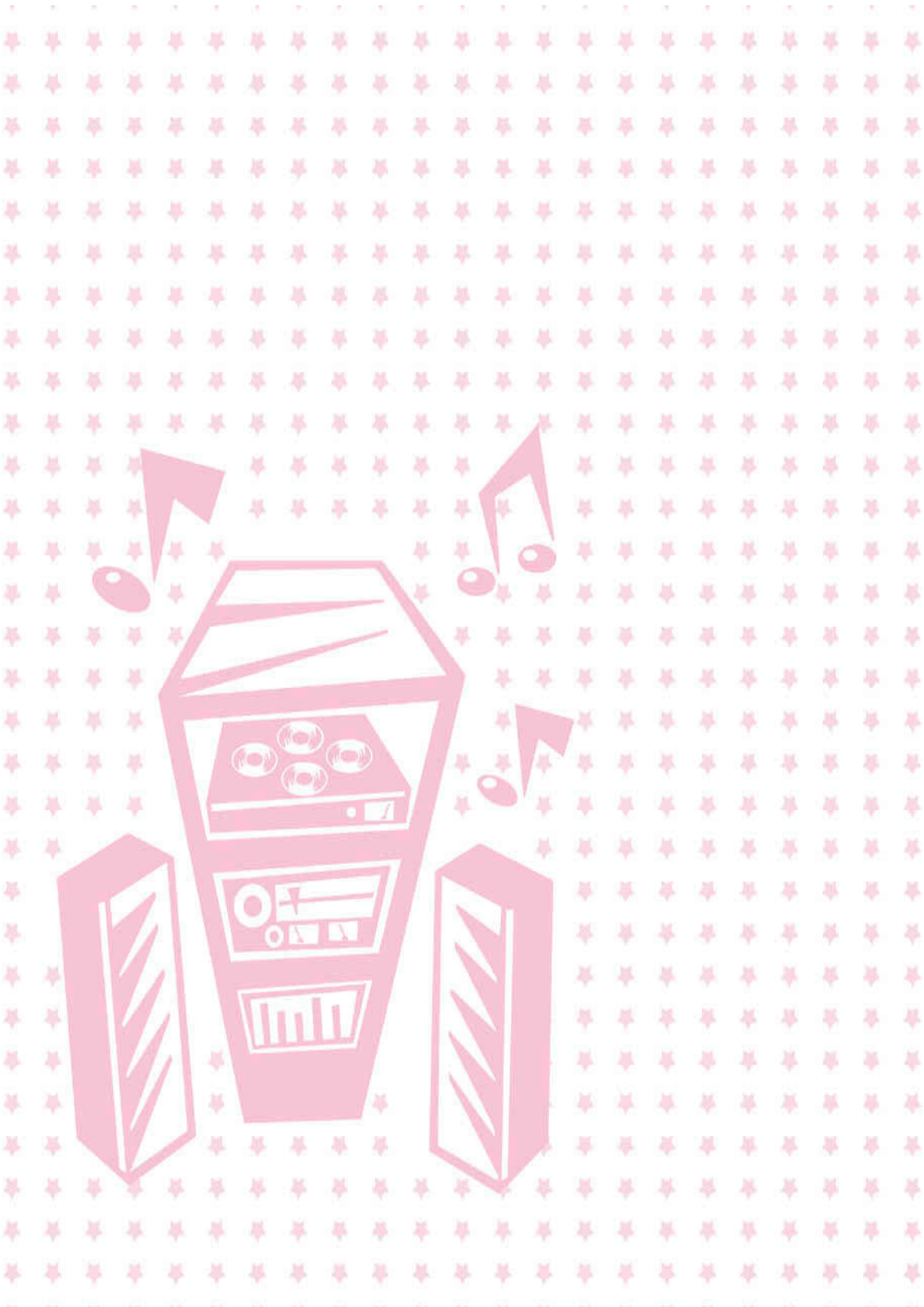
Every successful hostess has two secret weapons in her armoury: preparation and the Perfect Housewife's greatest ally – loads of lists. That's how she glides, calmly and elegantly, through her entertaining. And so can you.

Entertain in Style is the only book the Perfect Housewife needs to throw the perfect party and have fun without feeling frazzled. It will show you how to make your parties the ones no one can bear to miss – modern, chic, sparkling, simple but memorable – without breaking the bank.

You'll find all the help you need to organise all kinds of fabulous occasions from the simple to the formal, as well as quick and easy recipes and menus. There's general information in this chapter and heaps more tips, hints and ideas for different kinds of parties in the book.

Putting on a successful party, of any kind or size, is not rocket science – it's all about getting organised. Start your preparation, whether it's a small supper for friends, a birthday barbecue, or a more formal event, as soon as you can. The less you leave to do at the last minute, the better.

Always throw a party that's right for you and within your capabilities. Don't be overambitious, or spend more than you really want to.



What kind of party?

You may have an idea of the kind of party you want to hold but don't make a final decision until you have considered several other important factors. Is your home big enough to hold that kind of party or will you need to hire a venue? How many guests are coming? What is your budget? How much time can you spend on preparation?

Where?

If you are holding the party at home, decide which rooms to use and what kinds of party would be best suited to what you have available. If you are planning to entertain outside remember to consider seating and what you will do if the weather lets you down. Always have a Plan B up your sleeve.

When?

The time of day you plan to hold your party will help you decide the kind of event and the food and drink to serve. Brunches, buffet lunches, barbecues, teas and picnics are ideal 'daytime' parties and for times when your guest list may include a wide diversity of ages.

How many?

This will be governed by the kind of event you are planning, the space you have available and your budget. If you are planning a sit-down meal you'll need to limit your numbers to the size of your dining table. You can cope with larger numbers by serving a buffet meal, or holding a drinks party or barbecue.

The budget?

Work out how much you want to spend. Entertaining doesn't have to be expensive but if you don't keep a tight rein on your budget from the start it can be. Start by making a list of everything you will need to buy. If you do this right at the beginning of your party planning you will quickly see where the money is going and there will be time to make adjustments. Being on a tight budget won't show if you choose food and wine carefully.

Budget for:

- Invitations
 - Postage
 - Flowers and decorations
 - Food
 - Drink
 - Hiring anything you need – cutlery, china, equipment
-

Ways to keep control of the budget

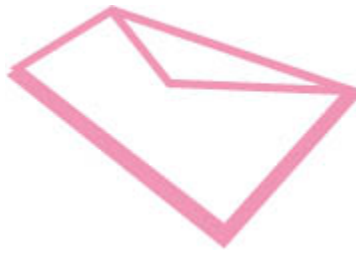
- Prepare as much of the food as you can yourself.
 - Select dishes that use foods that are in season – they'll be cheaper and full of flavour.
 - Keep your food simple – you do not need to provide a wide range of choices.
 - Serve wine and soft drinks not spirits.
 - Keep your eyes open for special offers on wines. If you're buying a large amount ask for a discount or buy on 'sale or return'.
 - Get your glasses on 'free hire' from the place you buy your wine.
 - If you need extra serving dishes, an ice bucket, a punchbowl or a piece of kitchen equipment, ask around your friends. The chances are one of them will be happy to let you borrow theirs.
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Invitations

Although it is now acceptable to phone or email invitations to all but the most formal events, everyone still likes to receive invitations in the post. If you telephone an invitation it's a good idea to follow it up with a short note.

Whether you phone or send an invitation remember to include:

- The kind of event. People like to know whether the party is to celebrate a special event, such as a birthday.
- Where it will be held. Include a map if necessary.
- The date and time.
- Whether there is a theme.
- What to wear. Guests really do like to know what to expect. It can be embarrassing to turn up in jeans and a shirt to be met by a hostess dressed as a flamenco dancer, with a matador, rose between his teeth, in tow!
- Make it clear whether children are invited. (A subtle way of raising this knotty problem if you're planning an adults-only event is to casually ask, 'Will you be all right getting a baby sitter?')
- Always ask guests to RSVP so you know how many are actually coming. It also gives you time to invite other people to make up the numbers if this is important. If guests are slow with their replies, give them a quick call.
- For all but the most impromptu parties, send out your invitations at least three weeks in advance to give prospective guests time to plan their schedules.
- Be specific about timings. If you are serving dinner at 8 p.m. invite guests for 7 p.m. so that there is plenty of time for 'stragglers' to arrive, and to serve apéritifs. If you need a party to end at a specific time don't be afraid to give a time on the invitation.



Remember to ask guests if there are any particular foods they cannot eat. It's generally easy to plan a meal around special dietary needs if you have advance warning.

The guest list

Don't get stressed drawing up your guest list – parties are meant to be enjoyable for you as well. Invite the people you want to have around you – but think about whether the event you are planning is the kind they will enjoy. For example, some people hate fancy dress but others can't wait to beat a path to the costume hire shop.

Themes?

Themes can give parties a sense of 'personality', are great icebreakers, and fun! Some parties lend themselves to themes, such as golden and silver wedding anniversaries, Halloween and Easter, but for other parties it's a case of putting on your thinking cap and devising something that suits the occasion. But it does take some effort to pull it off successfully and if you're not careful it can run away with the cash. Don't feel every party must have a theme.

Choose themes that are simple to create and whatever you do don't go overboard! Holding a black and white Roaring Twenties cocktail party and asking guests to dress accordingly is fine, using black and white china is fine, but trying to arrange for them to feast on black and white food at a black and white buffet table is way over the top!



Planning and preparation

This is where your lists are essential. Make separate lists of all the different aspects of party planning – guests, shopping, household tasks, items to be ordered – and keep them handy in a folder. The more you can get done in advance the more time you will have to devote to the personal touches that turn an average party into something memorable.

Food

Deciding on what to eat and drink may seem like negotiating a minefield. But relax. If you follow these general rules when deciding what to serve you can't go wrong:

- **Reflect the impression given on your invitations. If the invitation says 'dinner' you will need two or three courses – a few bowls of crisps and nibbles won't fit**

the bill. Decide on a simple starter, a main course and a dessert. One or two courses are fine for an informal supper or lunch.

- Make sure that the dishes you choose can be eaten in the way you have planned. For example, if you are having an informal meal or buffet for a large group, with guests eating with their plates on their laps, select dishes that can easily be eaten with a fork.
- Choose dishes you know you do well.
- Decide on your main course first, or the principal dishes on a buffet, and then build the rest of the meal around it.
- If you are serving three courses choose a cold starter and/or dessert to cut down on cooking. Or choose dishes that can easily be reheated.
- Think about texture, colour and the presentation of your dishes.
- If you are short of time choose some dishes you can make or prepare in advance and freeze. Or buy some of the dishes.
- Be realistic about the time you can devote to cooking the food for your party. If necessary check out the deli and local caterers and order some of the food.
- Always buy the best-quality ingredients you can.
- Think of the space and facilities of your kitchen both for preparation and serving food on the day of the party.
- Don't serve too much food – you want your guests to feel comfortably satisfied not uncomfortably full!

Anthea's top tip

Presentation matters. When you've gone to a lot of trouble preparing food, don't waste the effort by plonking it on a plate. Remember, every dish is a feast for the eyes so think

about garnishes, even if it is only a few mint leaves or a couple of sprigs of parsley.

How much to cook?

Per person:

Meat and poultry	4oz/100g
Fish (filleted)	6oz/175g
Prawns	6oz/175g
Rice or pasta (dry weight)	2oz/50g
Vegetables	6oz/175g
Fresh fruit	6oz/175g
Cream	3.5fl oz/100ml
Ice cream	7fl oz/200ml

Drinks

The days of providing your guests with a nonstop lake of wine and free-flowing spirits is long gone. Red and white wine, perhaps beer – depending on the occasion – and a selection of soft drinks and mineral water are all that is expected. Summer wine and fruit punches, and warm mulled wine on cold winter nights are always popular.

There's an awful lot of snobbery attached to wine, but don't worry about it. Choose wines you enjoy drinking or ask for suggestions from knowledgeable staff at wine merchants. It is fine to serve one wine throughout a dinner party, though you might like to finish with a sweet dessert wine.

How much to buy?

- For a dinner party allow three-quarters to one bottle of wine for each guest.
- For a drinks party allow half a bottle of wine per guest.
- For a daytime party allow one third of a bottle of wine for each guest.
- As a rough guide, and unless you're choosing to go with a particular type of food, buy two bottles of white wine to every bottle of red wine.

This is just a general guide, so it's a good idea to have a few bottles in reserve – you don't want to be rushing down to the all-night supermarket to replenish supplies halfway through the party!

TIPS

- Use picnic chiller boxes or large plastic bins filled with ice to chill wine, if you are short of fridge space.
- Make soft drinks interesting – decant them into attractive jugs and add fruity garnishes.
- If you are serving an iced fruit punch, freeze some of the fruit juice you are incorporating in ice-cube trays – then it won't dilute the punch.
- To get the maximum amount of juice from oranges, lemons and limes, roll the fruit under your hand on a flat surface before slicing in half and squeezing. Or pop them in the microwave for ten seconds before squeezing.
- Freeze clusters of grapes and hang them over the edge of your punchbowl.
- Freeze small pieces of lemon, lime, orange, or red berries in ice cubes, to drop into fresh juice drinks.

- If you are serving champagne, thoroughly rinse and dry the glasses. The merest trace of detergent will destroy the bubbles.
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Want to learn more about wine?

See if an expert from your local wine merchant does home tasting sessions. Invite your friends round and arrange a wine tasting. All you will need to do is provide some savoury nibbles, olives and nuts. So there's another excuse to party!



Getting prepared

Well in advance:

- Plan your menu and make lists of all the food and drink you will need to buy or order. Get as much as you can delivered – it will save you valuable time.
- Check your table linen and napkins.

- Check crockery, cutlery and glassware and borrow or arrange to hire anything you need.
- Buy any decorations and invitations.
- Clean out the freezer to make room for dishes you can prepare ahead.
- Enlist help from friends and family, both to assist with preparation and on the day. Don't be a Mary Martyr – accept offers of help with open arms.

Three weeks to go:

- Send out your invitations.
- Make and freeze any dishes that can be prepared in advance.
- Buy in any non-perishable foods.
- Order your drinks (and glasses if you need them).
- Order flowers to be delivered the day before the party.
- Spring-clean the house.

Two days before:

- Do the remaining food shopping (if possible delay buying fresh vegetables and fruit until the day of the party).
- Prepare any food that can be prepared in advance.

The day before:

- Give the bathroom a good clean.
- Make a list of all the jobs to be done on the day of the party.
- Look around any rooms you plan to use, and remove any delicate ornaments in case they are accidentally broken.
- Arrange the flowers.



The day of the party:

- Lay the dining table or buffet table.
- Make sure there are ample clear surfaces for guests to put down their drinks. Lay out coasters and cover precious pieces of furniture with cloths to prevent them getting marked.
- Prepare the drinks table.
- Prepare the remaining food, leaving as little as possible to be done at the last minute.
- Set out all the serving dishes you will need and the coffee tray.
- Do a final check of the bathroom. Put out paper tissues, clean fluffy towels, luxurious soap and hand cream for your guests. Hide your cleaning products out of sight.
- Vacuum and tidy the rooms where the party will be held.
- Check that the hall and cloakroom area are clean and tidy. Remove all of the family's coats and put them out of the way if you are using the cloakroom for your guests' coats. If you are using a bedroom for coats make sure that it is clean and tidy.
- Aim to have all of your tasks completed at least an hour before your guests arrive so you have time to shower, dress and relax.