

Entertaining ESSENTIALS

■ Invitations

- Select a date and time for the event; immediately email save-the-date notices
- Plan the theme in general terms ("cocktail party," "dim-sum luncheon," "afternoon high tea,") so you can specify on the invitations. (This gives guests an idea of what to expect and how to dress accordingly.)
- Snail-mail invitations for a special touch – or opt for email invites
- Update your RSVP list as replies come in

■ Menu

- Plan a menu (Buffet or hors d'oeuvres service are easiest to manage)
- Menu musts (check off that you've included at least one dish from each category):
 - Breads • Spreads • Vegetarian • Cheese • Meat • Sweet
 - Crunchy • Dough-y • Sparkling water • Still water • Wine
 - Fruit juice or spritzer • Signature event cocktail (optional; pitcher style will make it easier to manage)
- Order rental tableware, or purchase items (check off that you have addressed each):
 - Serving platters • Glassware (wine glasses or goblets can be used for all beverages) • Napkins • Cutlery • Coffee mugs (offering coffee after a nighttime party is helpful for those who must drive home)

■ Decorating and ambience

- Plan the theme or colour palette
- Purchase accessories in theme (For example, for a "White ball," white tablecloth, white feather wreath for front door, white votive candles, mirrored trays, white mantel and table ornaments etc)
- Create digital music playlists or burn party mixes to CD
- Plan size and style of floral arrangements

Tip For larger events you may want to hire a server to help out. If not, consider asking a friend to be "on-call" to provide assistance with moving plates or keeping food coming from the kitchen.

