



Trader Joe's was once known as a party store. Before most of us bought eggs, bread, produce, meat, milk and vitamins at TJ's, we came for cheese and wine. Now that we offer so many interesting appetizers, desserts, cheeses, quick meals and sauces for everyday meals and entertaining, here are some ideas to help make entertaining fun, easy, tasty and stress-free. No matter what your budget or space allowance, Trader Joe's will help make your gathering a huge success.

PARTY STYLES

The Big Three:

Buffet, Cocktail and Sit-Down Dinner are the most common types of parties today. Special occasions including weddings, showers and Monday night football gatherings are planned for one of these party styles.

Buffet

A festive and well thought out buffet is a fun and easy way to entertain. It gets the host away from the kitchen and out among the guests. A buffet can be as casual as pasta with garlic bread and a salad or as formal as a standing rib roast with all the trimmings.

There are two styles of buffet. At a lap service buffet, guests eat standing or seated at the sofa. This style lends itself to talking, mingling and grazing. It works for small receptions and parties in small places and it's the perfect way to serve a casual dinner party for card games or an evening of movie watching. A sit-down buffet is suitable for a more elaborate occasion; it works best for family holidays, weddings and large or small dinner parties. No matter what the menu, after the set up, with a buffet, you will be free to relax and enjoy the party too.

Formal Sit-Down Dinner

A formal sit down dinner is served in courses. Invite your guests to arrive a half hour or so early for a relaxed cocktail period.

Place cards at the table encourage lively conversation. Placing talkative people with quieter ones or new guests with regular ones will help spark lively conversation and keep the tone of the party balanced, preventing any guest from being left out of the fun.

Most hosts who plan formal dinners use servers. This allows the host to enjoy the party guests instead of jumping up and down to fetch food. For a formal party, take out your best china, silver and candle sticks. Make your table as beautiful as possible.

Informal Sit-Down Dinner

An informal sit-down dinner may or may not be served in courses, the food may be more casual, but the etiquette guidelines still apply: dinner is served at an appointed time, and assigned seats make it fun and interesting. For an informal sit down dinner, set the table in an eclectic style: mix china, glassware and linen patterns—use serving containers of different sizes, shapes, colors, and materials. Place all the food on the table at one time, and relax and enjoy your guests.

Brunch

Brunch will fit into buffet or sit down party plans and is another easy way to do last minute, low maintenance entertaining. When your cousin Lucy calls from the airport and says she's passing through and would love to see you and the kids—plan on brunch.

The best brunches are uncomplicated affairs made memorable by well-placed dollops of butter and cream and the best coffee available. Use this uncomplicated list to decide on the perfect brunch. Add a good Bloody Mary and, of course, good company.

Eggs

Eggs are the master of the universe—or at least the best foundation on which to build a brunch. The easiest brunch starts with eggs scrambled with cream, butter, salt and pepper. To this mix add any and everything you might feel like eating before noon, i.e., diced onions, green peppers, ham, cheese or fresh herbs.

Other egg ideas include frittatas, quiches, French toast, Eggs Benedict, huevos rancheros, scrambled eggs with smoked salmon, omelets, soufflés, deviled eggs, Eggs Florentine, Pasta alla Carbonara and crêpes. You can make it as simple or as elaborate as you like.

Great side dishes

Add some of the following for a full table and a mid morning meal that will keep your guests happy for hours.

Meats: Sausage, chicken wings, steak, pork chops, hash, smoked salmon, seafood, bacon

Breads: Biscuits, scones, crumpets, muffins, toast, baguettes, tortillas, foccacia, waffles, pancakes

Fruits: Chilled seasonal fruits and a selection of fruit juices

Condiments: Salsa, mustards, jams, jellies, ketchup, caramelized onions, real maple syrup

Potatoes: Fried potatoes, potato salads or hash browns

Take a few minutes the night before to set the table. This way you can enjoy the morning. Follow the party planner section of this guide to keep up with the details and relax. Remember— if you can scramble eggs, brunch is a snap.

Cocktails – A two-hour party

A cocktail party is a great way to entertain, especially if you are short on time and resources. Cocktails can be as simple or as elaborate as your budget and the occasion allow.

Guests enjoy a drink or two, nibble on a few appetizers and are then ready to move on to dinner or the next event of the evening. There are two ways to set up a cocktail party—buffet or tray pass. For a buffet style cocktail party, set up a sideboard as described in the buffet section of this brochure. For a tray pass party, you will need a waiter to pass through the guests with trays of appetizers. The tray passing continues for the length of the party. A tray pass party requires kitchen help to set up the trays and one or more servers depending on the number of guests.

Here are some tips to keep in mind when deciding which drinks and appetizers to serve:

By mixing complementary cuisines, your party will be colorful and tempting. At Trader Joe's we have cheese, frozen finger foods and fresh deli items that make perfect cocktail foods. We have food from all over the world. Dishes from China, Mexico, Thailand or Europe can provide contrasting colors, temperatures and textures. Balance rich, highly flavored foods with simple, fresh items, and try to include at least one or two low-calorie vegetable dishes.

Offer an assortment of appetizers

Plan appetizers from each of the following categories: meat or seafood, cheese, and vegetable. A variety of foods will encourage nibbling and conversation.

Look to our freezer cases to find a party gold mine—frozen mini crab cakes, mushroom turnovers, spicy buffalo wings, pot stickers and many Mexican and Italian entrées that will add dazzling style to your table.

We recommend about six different appetizers for small groups of 8 to 10 or fewer. For up to 20 people, offer ten and for up to 40, about one dozen. Guests will eat around 8 to 12 pieces of appetizers during a two-hour cocktail party. Although you will have to plan out your dishes and do the same amount of clean up and prep, you will be able to host your friends on a very small budget.

PLANNING YOUR PARTY

The Menu

At Trader Joe's, we have a wide selection of items that are ready to serve and we have all the ingredients to cook just about anything from scratch. You can choose to serve a wide selection that includes a mixture of prepared foods and ones cooked from scratch. For example, a dinner for company: hummus to start, followed by seasoned boneless leg of lamb served with salad, roasted potatoes, asparagus and bread, followed by an assortment of individual serving desserts - Pecan Pie Tartes, Chocolate Mousse Facets, Peach & Blueberry Panna Cotta, Crèmes Brûlées aux Framboises, Apple Blossoms...

You could also choose to keep it simple with just a few items, such as chili and a host of toppings served with corn muffins, followed by apple pie and super premium French vanilla ice cream. Either of these menus can be accomplished at Trader Joe's with very little work.

Set a Voluptuous Table

To create a feeling of drama, set a voluptuous table. Try this catering company trick: Use napkin-covered pedestals or boxes to add different levels to your table.

Use napkins that match your tablecloth or mix and match patterns. Place a basket of bread on one level and a board of cheese on another. Place appetizers on two or three other levels. Use the pedestals to create depth, variety and a bountiful feeling.



Cover every inch of the table with food and flowers

Space permitting, use an unusual container for your centerpiece. Or try something economical and simple such as pots of herbs built into mounds of moss to give a garden effect. Add twinkling white lights to your centerpiece flowers. Scour home magazines for ideas to create your own look.

Pick an area with easy access to set up your buffet

Any number of surfaces will work as your sideboard. If your buffet is lap service, set up your dining room table for the buffet. Set your table with pots of succulents, terra cotta platters and bowls, set the platters onto piles of raw beans, rice or colored pebbles to resemble a textured landscape. Use low lighting or candles to add atmosphere. If it is sit down, and you plan to use your dinner table for eating, and space is really an issue, set up the buffet on the kitchen counter.

For a kitchen set up, take a few moments to make a pleasing display by removing the toaster, microwave and other tools. Use one sink as an ice bucket and fill it with stylish bottles of still water, wine and soft drinks. Place glasses on a silver tray near by. Add white table linens and silver vases for flowers, silver trays for food and lots of candlelight.

Use Every Surface

Another idea for small places and medium sized gatherings is to set up platters of food, small plates, napkins and cutlery on every available table all over the party rooms: coffee tables, side tables and occasional tables, even book shelves. Set each surface with style. Add flowers and candlelight to draw your guests to all areas of the room. Let them explore your space and receive little goodies as their reward. A set up such as this will encourage mingling.

Lay out the buffet in logical order

Place plates at one end of the table, food in the middle and cutlery and napkins at the other end. Place food in the following order: main dishes up front and in the center, vegetables to one side, salads on the opposite side, and breads and desserts toward the back.

DEFINING MOMENTS

After you choose your party style, it's time to make your party game plan. Use this next section to work out the details.

Step one:

Pick a date, place, style and theme
Write the invitation
Prepare a guest list
Decide on the menu

Step Two:

Choose table settings, decorations, and music.
Make arrangements for any items you'll need to rent or borrow.

If you're grilling, buy charcoal or fill the propane tank. Start your shopping list with paper goods, matches and ice. Add food and liquor.

Step Three:

* Two–three weeks before the date

Mail or telephone your invitations to guests.

Do preliminary housecleaning, especially time-consuming jobs such as carpet cleaning, floor waxing and window cleaning. This is also a good time to clean the oven to avoid oven cleaning residues that may affect the taste of food.

Send written invitations for formal events such as business gatherings, formal dinners, and showers anywhere from 4 to 8 weeks in advance, depending on formality of the occasion.

WRITE AN INVITATION

The invitation gives your guests the first glimpse of what a great time you have planned for them. It lets them know what kind of host you are. So, use this first impression to put creativity and pizzazz into your invitation. All forms of invitations—handwritten, printed, e-mail or over the phone can have style.

Here's an outline:

1. Name of party host
2. Type of event (birthday party, formal dinner party, cocktails, etc)
3. Place
4. Date
5. Time
6. RSVP date and phone number or e-mail address.
7. Dress (black-tie, cocktail, casual, pool party wear)
8. Be specific about who is invited by adding: *and guest*, or *and family* (spouse and/or children)
9. Include a map for out-of-towners



THE DRINKS

Planning what you serve to drink is an important part of preparation for your gathering. To ensure happy guests, start by stocking the “new bar basics.” This will help you to be prepared for most requests.

Choose the cocktail of the moment or dig around in old recipe books and resurrect ones that your generation may not have tasted. Surprise your guests with cocktails from the 30s and 40s. Some old time drinks that were the rage of their day include Manhattans, Pink Ladies, Hurricanes, Knickerbockers, Cuba Libres and Scarlett O’Hara’s.

The New Bar Basics

Martinis are the current rage. We now see Martini bars, Martini books and Martini parties. Bartenders are creating new versions of this longtime favorite. The Ketel One Martini, Apple Martini, Lemon Drop and Flirtini are just a few of the hot drinks today.

Start with a selection of name brand vodkas and gins, and to this, add good vermouth and gourmet olives, apples, lemons and Flirtini fixin’s (champagne, pineapple juice and vodka).

Next, you will need at least two tequilas, one 100% Anejo agave for shooters, and one very good gold for Margaritas and other mixed tequila drinks. No bar is complete without a selection of single malt scotches and a good blended one. Bourbon is also enjoying a new, modern audience.

The Classics

Mixed drinks are the fun part of the party. Serving the best Sea Breeze, Bloody Mary or Long Island Iced Tea can make you the host or hostess of the season. Cocktail mixers are very important. Make sure you choose good tonic water, bottled water and as many fresh ingredients as possible.



Bar Set Up

Glasses:

Using skimpy glass sizes increases the traffic at the bar which also increases congestion and glassware usage. If you only have one glass, make it a 12 ounce. This size will accommodate mixed drinks, beer, water and soft drinks and is a reasonable portion.

White wine ideally is served in 6 ounce glasses with a 4.5 to 5 ounce portion.

Highballs and rickeys are served in 6-ounce glasses with about two large ice cubes.

Fizzes are served in 8-ounce glasses.

Plan to have on hand, depending on what you are serving:

Glasses:

Pilsner for Beer • Flute for Champagne • White Wine • Red Wine • Martini Shot • Collins • Old Fashioned

Supplies:

Cola Soda • Lemon Lime Soda • Ginger Ale • Good Olives • Lemons • Limes • Ice • Flavored Sparkling Water • Spring Water • Fresh Orange Juice • Fresh Lime Juice • Margarita Mix • Bloody Mary Mix • Tonic Water • Club Soda

Utensils:

Ice Bucket • Jigger • Bottle Opener • Corkscrew • Shaker • Ice Tongs

For every 10 adults, plan to have:

- For brunch or lunch: 15 glasses of wine, 15 cocktails, 4 liters of water and two six packs of beer.
- For a sit down dinner: 20 cocktails, 20 glasses of wine, 4 liters of water and 3 six packs of beer.
- For a 3 hour cocktail party, plan 40 cocktails/wine, 5 liters of water and 4 six packs of beer.

How many 1.5 ounce drinks are in each bottle of hard liquor?

750 ml. = 16 • 1 liter = 22 • 1.5 liter = 39

How many 4-5 ounce servings of wine or champagne?

750 ml. = 5 • liter = 6 • 1.5 liter = 10

Wine Suggestions

At Trader Joe's, highly drinkable, agreeable wines at reasonable prices are part of what we are known for.

Our wine selection is designed to make wine buying easy for adventurous beginners as well as more seasoned wine drinkers. When you come into Trader Joe's to start planning your party, ask one of our crew members for wine help. Each store has several people who are highly knowledgeable about our wines.

Use this guide to help make your wine selections. For the cocktail hour try an easy drinking, fruity chardonnay; for seafood and sushi try sauvignon blanc. Pair spicy foods with Champagne or Shiraz; spicy Chinese food with a dry Gewürztraminer. For dessert, select chilled bottles of Riesling or Gewürztraminer or choose a port. Serve Merlot or Cabernet Sauvignon with red meat and red sauce.

Here are some suggestions on chilling, presenting and serving Champagne.

Chilling the bottle is the first step to an evening of bubbly delight. Most experts suggest that the bottle be chilled to about 45 to 55 degrees.

The best way to chill the bottle is to let it rest for about 20 minutes in a wine bucket half filled with ice and water. This method will help to guard against over chilling the bottle and missing the full flavor of the wine.

Dry and present the bottle to your party with flair, making sure to let the onlookers see the label. Cut the foil neatly away.

Place the bottle on a flat surface and place a cloth napkin or towel over the bottle to prevent an unplanned cork escape. Keep the cork facing away from yourself and onlookers.

Keep one hand firmly on top of the cork—with the other hand, unwind the wire and remove the wire cage.

Hold the cork down with one hand. Hold the bottle at a 45-degree angle and slowly turn the bottle. Never twist the cork. The bubbles will slowly start to push the cork up. Keep a firm grip on the cork and slowly allow it to ease out with a "sigh." With this whisper, the foam should be poured into the glass. This method will preserve every drop of the precious beverage for your enjoyment, and your guests will enjoy your flair.

FOOD BUYING GUIDE

Basic party check list

Invitations
Plates
Dinner Napkins
Cocktail Napkins
Glasses
Ice
Table Linens
Serving Utensils
Platters
Cutlery
Candles

Special items

Use this guide when planning how much food to buy for a large group. It lists the quantities you'll need per person. For hearty eaters, plan on 1 1/2 servings per person.

1/4 pound of ham or red meat per person
chicken 1/6 to 1/4 lb.
1/4 pound pasta
1/2 cup cooked vegetables
1/3 pizza per person
1/4 cup nuts
1 1/2 cups chips
1 cup lettuce
3/4 cup rice
1-ounce cheese
1/8 of a pie
1/12 of a cake
1/12 of a cheesecake
1/2 cup ice cream

Appetizers:

3 pieces sushi
3 pieces dim sum
3 large shrimp
3 chicken drumettes
3 mini turnovers
3 mini crab cakes



ALL THE FUSS

One week to go

- Check your rsvps–telephone guests who have not responded to get a final count.
- Check your shopping list and continue to make additions.
- Check table linens.
- Choose serving pieces and wash the ones that are seldom used; polish silver.
- Place special orders for flowers, meats, seafood or other ingredients you'll need.
- Start foods that can be made ahead, such as snack mixes and things that will freeze.

Gearing Up

(2 to 3 days ahead)

- Shop for everything except the most perishable items.
- Check your recipes to make sure you have everything you need– add any missing ingredients to the list.
- Plan your cooking timetable. Lay out your menu and make a plan to have each dish prepared at the appropriate time.
- Re-check your shopping list for missed ingredients.
- Move any furniture.

At the gate

(1 day ahead)

- Check your list and shop for perishable and last minute items.
- Finish cleaning the house.
- Decorate for the party.
- Set your tables and serving areas.
- Prepare as much of your menu as possible.
- Thaw frozen items in the refrigerator.

Party Day

- Spot-check house for final cleaning.
- Prepare the food according to your timetable.
- Wash dishes as you go to save cleanup time later.
- Run the dishwasher and empty it to make room for post-party dishes.
- Chill all drinks and cold foods.

Add the Magic

Two hours to go

- Stop. Take a soothing bath and put on your best face and party outfit.

1 hour to go

- Put finishing touches on the food, tables and flowers.

15 minutes before doorbell begins to ring

- Set out cheese and appetizers or snacks.
- Open wine.
- Light candles and turn on music.
- Relax and prepare to enjoy your guests.