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How to Plan a Holiday Potluck Party

5 Weeks Before:

- Decide which dishes you will prepare. For large holiday potlucks, the host typically makes the turkey, ham, and the immediate accoutrements; if you're doing so, order your meat at this time. For gatherings between Thanksgiving and Christmas, consider shareable, make-ahead dishes and casseroles that cook quickly or reheat easily.

One Month Before:

- Invite your guests and assign dishes. Email or send [invitations](#) that include your menu, listing the dishes you will make, along with each guest's assignment. You may want to let your guests know how many people you are expecting to ensure that everyone gets to sample each dish.
- Discuss with the guests how much oven or stove time they will need once they arrive, or whether their dish will already be cooked. This will help you schedule oven time for each guest as necessary.

Two Days Before:

- Iron linens and polish silver.

One Day Before:

- Set table, lay out serving pieces and trivets on the buffet or sideboard.
- Make labels for each dish so guests will know where to place their contribution. This cuts down on questions just before the meal -- when you'll be at your busiest.