

Holiday Potluck Party



CONTENTS

2 CHECKLIST FOR HOSTING A POTLUCK PARTY

With a bit of planning, you can cut down on the kitchen chaos when guests arrive with dishes that may require a bit of last-minute preparation before serving.

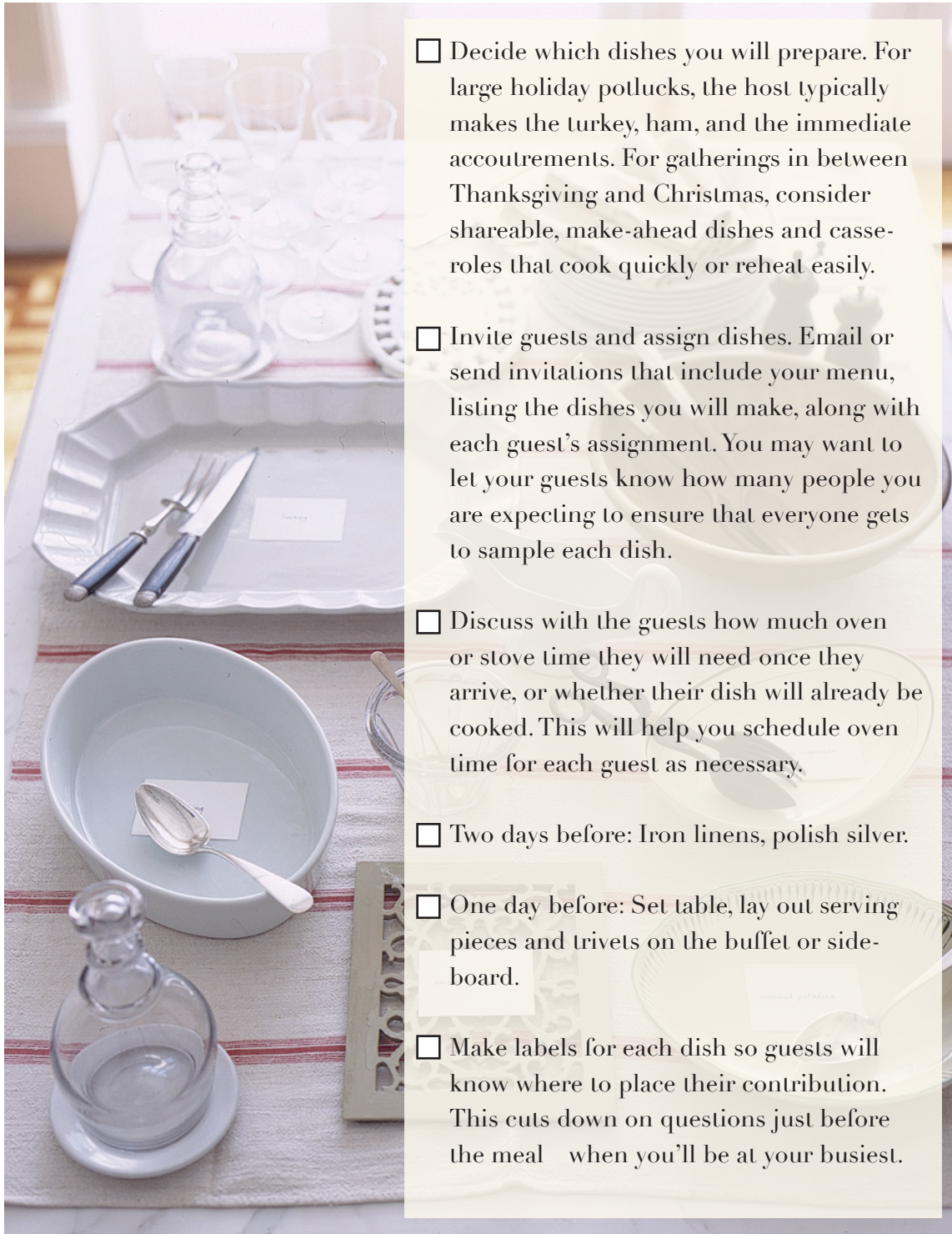
3 RECIPES: POTLUCK FAVORITES

Here are three main dishes that can be made ahead of time and transported easily so that you can serve them at your potluck party or bring them to someone else's.

6 FESTIVE TABLETOP IDEAS AND FAVORS

Complement the array of dishes on your sideboard or buffet with basket centerpieces filled with fruit, garland, and other beauties of the season. Plus, create a festive display for favors.

CHECKLIST FOR HOSTING A POTLUCK PARTY



- ☐ Decide which dishes you will prepare. For large holiday potlucks, the host typically makes the turkey, ham, and the immediate accoutrements. For gatherings in between Thanksgiving and Christmas, consider shareable, make-ahead dishes and casseroles that cook quickly or reheat easily.
- ☐ Invite 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, 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.

RECIPES

BAKED-EGGPLANT PARMESAN

SERVES 8

Choose firm, smooth eggplants. We bake rather than fry ours for less mess and less fat.

	Olive oil for baking sheets
2	large eggs
3/4	cup plain dry breadcrumbs
3/4	cup finely grated Parmesan, plus 2 tablespoons for topping
1	teaspoon dried oregano
1/2	teaspoon dried basil
	Coarse salt and ground pepper
2	large eggplants (2 1/2 pounds total), peeled and sliced into 1/2-inch rounds
6	cups (48 ounces) store-bought chunky tomato sauce or homemade chunky tomato sauce.
2	cups shredded mozzarella

1. Preheat oven to 375°. Brush 2 baking sheets with oil; set aside. In a wide, shallow bowl, whisk together eggs and 2 tablespoons water. In another bowl, combine breadcrumbs, 3/4 cup Parmesan, oregano, and basil; season with salt and pepper.

2. Dip eggplant slices in egg mixture, letting excess drip off, then dredge in breadcrumb mixture, coating well; place on baking sheets. Bake until golden brown on bottom, 20 to 25 minutes. Turn slices; continue baking until browned on other side, 20 to 25 minutes more. Remove from oven; raise oven heat to 400°.

3. Spread 2 cups sauce in a 9-by-13-inch baking dish. Arrange half the eggplant in dish; cover with 2 cups sauce, then 1/2 cup mozzarella. Repeat with remaining eggplant, sauce, and mozzarella; sprinkle with remaining 2 tablespoons Parmesan. Bake until sauce is bubbling and cheese is melted, 15 to 20 minutes. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

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MEDITERRANEAN CHICKEN

SERVES 8

Dark chicken meat is ideal for stews; it becomes more tender the longer and slower it cooks. To remove the thin top layer of the orange peel, use a vegetable peeler.

1/4	cup all-purpose flour
8	chicken legs (6 to 8 ounces each), split and skin removed
2	tablespoons olive oil
1	large onion, finely chopped
5	garlic cloves, thinly sliced
1 1/4	cups reduced-sodium chicken broth
2	tablespoons tomato paste
1/3	cup Kalamata olives, pitted and halved
4	strips (1/2 by 2 inches) orange zest
	Coarse salt

1. Place flour on a plate. Dredge chicken in flour, shaking off excess.

2. In a Dutch oven, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Working in batches, sauté chicken, turning as each side browns, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Using a slotted spoon, transfer to a platter.

3. Add remaining tablespoon oil to pot. Cook onion and garlic, stirring frequently, until onion is softened, about 7 minutes. Add broth, tomato paste, olives, and orange zest; season with salt. Bring to a boil.

4. Return chicken to pot. Cover; simmer, turning chicken once or twice, until tender but not falling off the bone, about 20 minutes. Serve hot.

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EASY PAELLA

SERVES 8

You don't need a paella pan to make this meal. Use a wide, shallow sauté pan with a lid. If you are taking this dish to a party, reheat it covered; add water as needed.

2	tablespoons olive oil	1	cup frozen green peas, thawed
3/4	pound peeled and deveined medium shrimp		
1	package (12 ounces) chicken sausage, sliced in 1/2-inch rounds		
1	medium onion, finely chopped		
2	cloves garlic, minced		
1 1/2	cups long-grain rice		
1/4	teaspoon paprika		
1/4	teaspoon ground turmeric		
1	can (14 1/2 ounces) diced tomatoes		
2	cans (14 1/2 ounces each) reduced-sodium chicken broth		
	Coarse salt and ground pepper		

FOLD

1. In a heavy 12-inch sauté pan, heat 1 tablespoon oil over medium-high heat. Cook shrimp until just pink on both sides, 4 to 5 minutes (do not overcook). Transfer to a plate.

2. Add remaining tablespoon oil and sausage to pan; cook over medium-high heat until beginning to brown, about 2 minutes. Add onion, and cook, stirring frequently, until translucent, 3 to 4 minutes. Add garlic and rice; cook, stirring to coat, until rice is translucent, 1 to 2 minutes.

3. Stir in paprika, turmeric, tomatoes, and broth, scraping up browned bits from bottom of pan with a wooden spoon. Season with salt and pepper.

4. Bring to a boil, then reduce heat to a simmer. Cover, and cook until rice is tender and has absorbed almost all liquid, 20 to 25 minutes. Stir in peas; cook 1 minute. Stir in cooked shrimp; serve immediately.

Note: Paella is usually flavored and colored with saffron, the world's most expensive spice. We used paprika and turmeric instead, which are less expensive but create an equally good dish.

ORANGE POPPY SEED SPIRALS

MAKES ABOUT 1 1/2 POUNDS

Sablé is the French word for “sandy.” This classic dough produces cookies with a remarkably delicate texture—they crumble the minute they’re in your mouth.

FOR ORANGE SABLÉ DOUGH

1 1/4	cups whole blanched almonds
1	cup confectioners’ sugar
3/4	cup (1 1/2 sticks) unsalted butter
3	tablespoons finely grated orange zest (2 to 3 oranges)
1	large egg
1	tablespoon freshly squeezed lemon juice
1 1/2	cups all-purpose flour

1. Place almonds and sugar in the bowl of a food processor. Process until the mixture resembles coarse cornmeal, and set aside.

2. Place butter and orange zest in the bowl of an electric mixer fitted with the paddle attachment. Beat on medium speed until white and fluffy, 2 to 3 minutes. On low speed, add the almond mixture, and beat until combined, 10 to 15 seconds. Add egg and lemon juice, and combine. Add flour, and beat until combined. Wrap in plastic; store, refrigerated, up to 1 week, or freeze up to 3 months.

FOLD

MAKES ABOUT 3 DOZEN

FOR ORANGE POPPY SEED SPIRALS

	Orange Sablé Dough
1/3	cup poppy seeds

1. Bring dough to room temperature. Place between two 12-by-14-inch pieces of parchment; roll out to an 8-by-12-inch rectangle. Transfer to a baking sheet; chill 30 minutes.

2. Transfer dough to a clean work surface. Remove top piece of parchment; sprinkle poppy seeds over top. Using bottom parchment to support dough, fold bottom edge to meet middle. Fold over two more times, forming a 1-inch-tall rectangle. Wrap; chill at least 2 hours.

3. Heat oven to 350°. Line two baking sheets with parchment. Remove parchment from dough, and cut into 1/4-inch-thick squares. Place on baking sheets, spaced 2 inches apart.

4. Bake cookies until edges turn light golden, about 15 minutes. Transfer to a wire rack to cool. Bake or freeze remaining dough. Store in an airtight container up to 2 weeks.



Cranberries & Pine Basket

TOOLS & MATERIALS

floral wire
pine sprigs and branches with pinecones attached
handleless basket
glass bowl
cranberries
floral shears

BASKET HOW-TO

The handle will be decorative—don't use it to lift basket.

1. With floral wire, attach pine sprigs end-to-end to encircle basket; attach to basket with floral wire. Fill a glass bowl (just smaller than basket) with fresh cranberries.
2. For handle, cut two pine branches. Wire branches into an arch. Wire more sprigs and cones to branches to fill in gaps. Place berry bowl inside basket. With floral wire, attach handle to basket.





Ornament Basket

TOOLS & MATERIALS

silver ornaments
floral picks
floral tape
plastic liner
basket
floral foam
juniper and cedar sprigs
eucalyptus leaves

BASKET HOW-TO

Use ornaments with bases thin enough to be wrapped to a floral pick. Remove ornaments' toppers (from which they are hung). Attach each ornament to a floral pick: Wrap base of ornament and the top of pick together with floral tape. Place a plastic liner in basket; trim to fit. Trim floral foam to fit liner; soak according to manufacturer's instructions. Place in liner. Push greenery sprigs, leaves, and ornaments into floral foam.





Favor Tree

There's no such thing as too many holiday treats. Made from wrapping paper, these simple containers can hang from a Christmas-tree form (like the one at left), holding candy or very small presents.



Using a straightedge and a utility knife, cut a piece of wrapping paper into a rectangle. Roll the rectangle into a cylinder, and tape lengthwise with invisible tape. Then tape inside of one opening: The piece of tape should equal the diameter of the opening and be positioned so that one-half the width of tape extends beyond edge of paper; fold exposed tape back over itself, and press the top edges of the cylinder together. Fill cone with candy or gift. Close the other side the same way, but make the end perpendicular to the first. Hold two pieces of string together, and fold in half; knot the resulting four lengths just below the fold, leaving a loop at the end. Position cone so one end abuts knot of strings; place two lengths of string on each side of cone. Tie off the string, and hang from the loop.