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## Holiday Party Timeline

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Timing and strategizing are crucial to the success of holiday parties and special feasts. Prevent a frenzy of last-minute preparation by using this itemized checklist as a guide for the season.

### 1 Month Before:

- ☐ Choose the type of party you want to throw.
- ☐ Prepare your guest list.
- ☐ Mail or email invitations.

### 3 Weeks Before:

- ☐ Arrange to borrow, rent, or buy serving pieces and other items that you might need, such as platters, glasses, flatware, or table linens.
- ☐ Choose the menu; organize recipes for easy reference.
- ☐ Create a timeline for preparing your chosen recipes.
- ☐ Hire a bartender if desired.
- ☐ If ordering a fresh turkey, do it now; if you're buying it frozen, you still have time, but don't wait until the last minute. Remember: It's best to allow a few days for thawing, depending on the size of the bird (generally, it takes about one day to defrost every 5 pounds).
- ☐ Order flowers. Florists are busy during the holidays, so place your order well in advance.
- ☐ Prepare any items -- pie doughs, soups, and appetizers -- that can be frozen.
- ☐ Read through recipes and make lists of the ingredients you need to buy. Stock up on pantry items, such as sugar, flour, and other nonperishables.
- ☐ Try out any new recipes you want to troubleshoot.

## 2 Weeks Before:

- ☐ If you're throwing a potluck, or if friends have offered to bring something, let guests know what to make.
- ☐ Purchase wine and liquor, and arrange to have cases delivered to your home.
- ☐ Set the table, as a trial run, to make sure you have all the dishes and serving utensils you'll need.

## 1 Week Before:

- ☐ Call or email guests who have not yet RSVP'd to see if they plan to attend, and also follow up with guests who have offered to bring a dish.
- ☐ Make space in the refrigerator or freezer so you'll have room to store groceries.
- ☐ Prepare recipes that keep well up to a week.

## 4 Days Before:

- ☐ Purchase all remaining nonperishables.
- ☐ Start defrosting a large frozen turkey on a rimmed baking sheet set in the coldest part of the refrigerator.

## 2 Days Before:

- ☐ If using cloth napkins or tablecloths, iron them now.
- ☐ Place frozen pie dough in the refrigerator to defrost overnight.
- ☐ Wash serving pieces, plates, flatware, and glasses, and polish if necessary.

## 1 Day Before:

- ☐ Assemble pies, and bake (or wait until the next morning).
- ☐ Begin making yeast doughs for rolls and biscuits (some need to be started the next day).
- ☐ Brine the turkey.
- ☐ Pick up fresh flowers (or have them delivered).

- ☐ Pick up fresh roast or turkey and purchase any perishables, such as salad greens, fresh bread, and seafood.
- ☐ Wash and prepare salad greens and other vegetables, and blanch vegetables for crudites (keep these wrapped in paper towels). Refrigerate all separately, in airtight containers.

#### 4 to 7 Hours Before:

- ☐ Place flower arrangements.
- ☐ Remove turkey from the refrigerator, and let it come to room temperature before cooking.
- ☐ Set up the bar, if it isn't already done.

#### 4 to 5 Hours Before:

- ☐ Chill white wine and sparkling wine.

#### Up to 1 Hour Before:

- ☐ Bake rolls and biscuits.
- ☐ Finish preparing side dishes.