



BLUFF HEIGHTS

NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

INC

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HAPPY HOLIDAYS!

A Well-Dressed Home for the Holidays

by Sasha Witte

Here are a few simple ideas on how to prepare your home for entertaining this holiday season.

Set the stage

All Aglow: We all look best with warm light at face level instead of just from above. Candles are great for this, but also consider adding beautiful lamps to your buffet or server. Remember — atmosphere is half the battle!

Create floral arrangements the day before the event. Invariably they take longer to create than I ever anticipate. Or visit one of our wonderful local floral arrangers and invest in beautiful arrangements that remove one item from your own to-do list.

Small Groupings: Arrange your furniture so there are several intimate areas for guests to cluster and converse.

Dim the lights before the guests arrive. There's nothing worse than feeling like you're below a poorly placed spot light while you're trying to make a first impression.

Opportunity for Eye Contact: Keep table centerpieces low. Make sure

guests can flirt across the table.

Set the Stage with Music: Have fun creating a music playlist for the group coming over. Start the music at least fifteen minutes before you're expecting anyone, so it starts to put you in the mood before the gang shows up.

Welcoming guests

Share the Load: Consider serving a combination of home-made and pre-made. I love having an item or two that I've created, and let Olives do the rest!

A host's chief job, in my opinion, is to do one's best to introduce and connect guests to one another so everyone has the opportunity for an interesting conversation at your party.

A cup of hospitality

Create a bar and beverage station separate from the often-hectic kitchen. If you don't have a bartender, create a

simple and tasty cocktail in a server for those looking for something besides wine and beer.

Consider a Simple Hot Beverage: Many years I've heated apple cider on the stove and doled it out into mugs along with cinnamon sticks and a splash of dark rum or brandy. Yummy!

Serve wine from a decanter instead of the bottle. It gives your red wine an opportunity to breathe and it looks pretty to boot!

If you're brave, let guests make their own cocktails. Laminate and display a few favorite recipes on cards at the bar and allow your friends to mix and shake their own creations.

Not everyone drinks, so make sure to have a lovely beverage or two that doesn't include alcohol.

When guests ask if they can help, take them up on it! Make a mental list of items that guests can assist with when they're arriving like serving the wine or offering appetizers to other guests. This also gives folks an opportunity to meet each other.

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The main event

Add simple flourishes to your dinner table. Consider rolling your cloth napkins and topping each one with a cinnamon stick all tied up in twine or a red ribbon bow.

A Sweet Finish: For dessert, offer *continued on pg. 3*

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something sweet and sinful, and something sweet but healthy for those of us trying to behave.

Helpful tips

Give a Gift to the Giver: Don't show up for a friend's party empty handed! Bring along some small token that shows them how glad you are they cared to invite you to their own shindig.

Keep the Plans for your Event Simple: Make sure you don't give yourself too

much work to take care of after your guests have arrived.

My goal for myself is to generally have everything ready to go a half hour before guests arrive so I can pour myself the first cocktail and relax a bit before the party starts.

Failing that, just relax and settle into the adventure when the doorbell rings — because when you're relaxed and enjoying yourself, your guests are sure to do the same!