6 Steps To A Stress Free Dinner Party



1. Consider Doing a Theme

Themed dinner parties are great fun because they can expose you to foods you and your guests wouldn’t normally eat. Mexican, Italian, Thanksgiving in July, or a movie-themed party are fun ways to get creative with it. Hosting a themed party can make planning a menu easier because the menu almost plans itself. Get into it with decorations, costumes, and music revolving around your theme.

2. Plan the Menu

Deciding what to create (and how to do it), is the greatest challenge of any dinner party. Obviously, you want to show off your best dish, but cooking a time-consuming chicken galantine won't do anyone any favors. Main dishes that are hearty enough to be made ahead of time are ideal, so you can spend more time entertaining your guests, and less on last-minute prep. For this, Slow Cooker and Pressure Cooker recipes like Root Beer Pulled Pork Sandwiches or Lasagna are perfect. Despite being effortless, they taste like you slaved over a hot stove all day.

Just because side dishes are called "sides", doesn't mean they can't have the wow factor that your entrée does. When choosing sides, go for something with complementary but different flavors than your main. Cornbread compliments a pulled pork sandwich because it brings sweetness to the salty and savory flavors of the pork, while roasted green beans will bring a crunch to round out the textures. Two to three side dishes are typically enough to complete the meal without overcrowding your table and palate.

Don't neglect the h'ordeuvres, but there's no need to go overboard. Unless you're throwing a wine and cheese party, one or two light appetizers will do to avoid premature food comas. If you're worried about saving time, it's okay to go with

store-bought (whether you admit that to your guests or not is up to you). Cheese platters, ham roll-ups or a buffalo chicken dip are all easy ways to keep your guests satisfied while waiting for the main show to begin. Plan to have your sides done and ready in the Roaster when your guests arrive so all you have to do is plate and serve.

3. …Then Your Guest List

Your guests are the heart of your dinner party. Similar to your menu options, less can be more. When planning your numbers, keep in mind how much space you have in your house as well as, realistically, how many people your recipe will feed. It's better to have leftovers for the next few days or to send with guests than it is to run out of food. Sending invites for a dinner party is typically done about two weeks ahead of the date to give a proper response and planning time. If you're doing a theme, this will also give your invitees a chance to get their attire ready.

Also, consider personalities and relationships when selecting your invite list. Inviting four of your closest, but shy friends who don't know each other may lead to awkward conversation gaps. That's not to say everyone has to know everyone, but everyone should know at least one other person

(besides you) well enough to make conversation. We're not a fan of assigning seats at the table, because if there's a great conversation flow during appetizers, there is no need to break it up.

4. Beverages Need Love Too

Drinks are the final piece of the menu but are also the easiest to pull together. For most groups, a full bar with top-shelf liquor isn't necessary. Simply making a signature cocktail or two that fit with the menu, a wine option, and one non-alcoholic choice should be enough to please most. Pitchers of water on the bar during appetizers, and on the table for dinner are also an accommodation that can be overlooked easily.

5. Enlist Help

A second set of hands on deck may be the single most important thing you can do for your sanity when planning a dinner party. Recruiting a roommate, spouse, or friend to be your "right-hand man" for last-minute grocery store runs (there will always be at least one), helping plate and serve food, and greet guests will go a long way in feeling more put together. Even if you never need them, it will be comforting knowing you

have a backup.

6. Don’t Sweat the Small Stuff

Things will happen. Your best friend will show up with a new gluten-free, vegan diet, your decorative candle will get knocked over and scorch your table linens, or your cousin will bring a guest without any prior warning. For better or for worse, these are all a natural part of the entertaining process. If you laugh it off and move on, we promise your guests will too and be more focused on your overall awesomeness than any flubs. The one thing you won’t have to worry about is your food turning out great—we’ve got that part of it covered.

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8 College Apartment Kitchen Essentials You’re Probably Forgetting



Moving on your own for the first time can be tough. Not only do you have to figure out how to use a washing machine on your own, but you also have to fully stock the place with all the essentials a college student needs. When you're trying to get ready for the big move and a new school year, it's easy to forget things, so we've come up with a list to make it easier:

1. **Pots and Pans:** A staple of any kitchen, pots, and pans should be one of the first things you buy for your first kitchen. You don't need anything too fancy or extensive, just a few sizes of each.

2. **Can Opener:** Living with your parents for the first 18+ years can lull you into a false sense of security that there will always be a can opener close by. It's disappointing when you get home from your first trip to the grocery store and you can't get into any of your canned goods without the proper equipment.

3. **Slow Cooker:** Class all day and studying all night can leave you with little time to cook. Don't resort to eating fast food

for every meal. A Slow Cooker will save you time and hassle and money (those burger runs add up). Just throw your ingredients in before classes, set your temperature, and come home to a prepared meal.

4. **Measuring Cups:** Cooking is a lot easier when you know how much of everything you're putting in. Measuring cups don't have to be fancy, in fact, you can usually get them at the dollar store.

5. **Basic Cooking Utensils:** Spatulas, mixing spoons, a set of knives, and a pasta spoon will do wonders to make your life in the kitchen easier. These also don't have to be anything extravagant (just make sure that everything is heat-resistant).

6. **Vacuum Sealer:** College students are busy, meaning you may not have time to cook with all of the groceries you buy. Don't let them (and the money you spent on them) go to waste by vacuum sealing everything. This will also help keep your refrigerator clean and free of moldy, spoiled food.

7. **Mixing Bowls:** Large bowls come in handy for more than just mixing food. They can also be used for serving, holding fruit, or soaking small dishes without blocking the sink. Metal or glass will last a lot longer for just a little more money.

8. **Pizza Cutter:** Don't be caught without one. It can only lead to disappointment.

Chicken Mole And Mexican Rice



Chicken Mole

Your Key Ingredients:

NESCO Pressure Cooker
NESCO 8 Inch Electric Skillet

Grocery Ingredients:

Chicken

6-8 boneless chicken breasts, defrosted
1 teaspoon garlic powder
1 teaspoon poultry seasoning
2 cups water

Mole Sauce

2 Tablespoons vegetable oil
2 cups finely chopped onions
¼ cup chili powder
3 Tablespoons light brown sugar
1 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon pepper
Pinch of ground cloves
1, 16 oz can diced tomatoes
3 Tablespoons cocoa powder
3 Tablespoons peanut butter
2 cups water

Mexican Rice

2 cups white rice
1 Tablespoon oil
1 teaspoon garlic
1 teaspoon cumin
1 ½ teaspoon salt
16 oz tomato paste
4 cups water
2 cups frozen peas and carrots

Instructions:

Chicken

1. Add water to **NESCO® Pressure Cooker**. Place chicken breasts on wire rack in cooker and set regulator knob to PRESSURE. Set Cooker to HIGH temp for 5 minutes and press START. Timer will not begin counting down until ideal pressure is reached.
2. Ensure that internal temperature of chicken reaches 180°F for doneness. When finished, release the pressure but

leave chicken in cooker to keep warm.

Mole Sauce

1. In **NESCO® 8 Inch Electric Skillet**, heat oil over medium-high heat. Add onion and cook until onions slightly are browned about 10 to 12 minutes.
2. Stir in chili powder, brown sugar, cloves and cook for 2 minutes, continuing to stir.
3. Mix in tomatoes, cocoa powder, peanut butter, and water. Let simmer over medium-low heat for 15 minutes, or until desired thickness is achieved.

Mexican Rice

1. Preheat skillet to medium-high and add oil. Reduce heat to medium, add rice, stirring constantly until lightly brown, about 3 minutes.
2. Stir in garlic, cumin, salt, tomato paste, and water. Raise heat to medium-high and bring to a boil. Cover and cook until rice is tender.
3. Add peas and carrots, and cook for another 5 minutes. Fluff with a fork and serve.

Add Color To Your Table With NESCO’s Slow Cookers!



Keep your holiday appetizers and sauces tasty and warm in your colorful NESCO 1.5 Qt. Slow Cookers. From rich brown meatballs and honey wings to golden cheese sauces and hot bean dips, NESCO Slow Cookers help make your table more festive.

Let us know your favorite NESCO Slow Cooker recipes!