

Cocktail Party Checklist: Free Detailed Planning Guide



3 Weeks Ahead

- ☐ Choose a date & time: Verify date for conflicts, Call key invitees to choose best date
- ☐ Choose a theme
- ☐ Invite guests: Make the guest list, Gather addressss, Create an invitation

2 Weeks Ahead

- ☐ Send invitations

1-2 Weeks Ahead

- ☐ Send any remaining invites or additions
- ☐ Map the party layout
- ☐ Plan the bar setup
- ☐ Start 5 shopping lists (see shopping checklists): Decorations & Supplies, Liquor Non-perishables & Frozen, Foods Perishables, Last minute Items
- ☐ Plan decorations, then add items to the appropriate list
- ☐ Incorporate birthday festivities
- ☐ Order decorations from PartySwizzle.com
- ☐ Plan drinks, then add items to the appropriate list : Alcohol->Liquor list, Mixers->Non-Perishables list, Garnishes-

>Perishables list

- ☐ Plan food, then add items to the appropriate list
- ☐ Determine dishes, serving trays, glassware & pitchers needed: Bar supplies, Two hors d'oeuvre serving trays, Cocktail glasses, Bowls or dishes for garnishes, nuts, toothpicks (fresh & used), dipping sauce, shrimp tails, etc.
- ☐ Pitchers for: Specialty drink Juices & mixers Water Liquid waste at the bar
- ☐ Label dishes and pitchers to avoid confusion later
- ☐ Check indoor & outdoor lighting and walkways for needed repairs
- ☐ Determine any household and home improvement supplies
- ☐ Buy Decorations & Supplies
- ☐ Reserve any needed rental supplies
- ☐ Hire bartender, if applicable
- ☐ Install dimmer (rheostat) switches

1 Week Ahead

- ☐ Launder tablecloths, towels, rugs
- ☐ Check weather & plan outfit
- ☐ Drop-off dry cleaning
- ☐ Create party playlist in iPod or make CDs
- ☐ Buy Non-perishables
- ☐ Buy Liquor
- ☐ Order flowers, if applicable
- ☐ Call all invitees that have not viewed the invitation
- ☐ Polish any silver you will be using

3-4 Days Ahead

- ☐ Light house cleaning
- ☐ Thorough bathroom cleaning
- ☐ Clean fireplace, if needed
- ☐ Pick up dry cleaning
- ☐ Arrange for a few close friends to "help" and get to the party 15 minutes early

2-3 Days Ahead

- ☐ Prepare anything you can freeze for your hors d'oeuvres (this may require an extra trip to the grocery to buy some

perishables on your list)

- ☐ Clean/mow/trim/shovel outside areas including front walk, door mat, front door, and smoking area

2 Days Ahead

- ☐ Clean out your refrigerator, you will need the space
- ☐ Upload/clear out pictures in camera
- ☐ Peel doilies for serving trays
- ☐ Call any important invitees that have not RSVP'd
- ☐ Arrange furniture, stereo and lighting
- ☐ Start placing decorations
- ☐ Clear area for coats, put out umbrella stand
- ☐ Confirm bartender & rentals

1 Day Ahead

- ☐ Defrost frozen foods
- ☐ Buy Perishables
- ☐ Pick up rentals
- ☐ Pick up flowers
- ☐ Prepare sauces & fillings
- ☐ Prepare anything that is served chilled
- ☐ Prepare Jell-o shooters, store on baking sheets in refrigerator
- ☐ Prepare anything that needs to marinate overnight
- ☐ Setup the bar including alcohol, unopened mixers and pitchers
- ☐ Finish placing decorations
- ☐ Setup smoking area
- ☐ Charge camera battery
- ☐ Make simple syrup, if needed
- ☐ Mix specialty drink
- ☐ Listen through playlist to see if any adjustments are necessary
- ☐ Set fireplace, if using
- ☐ Cash and cab numbers on hand
- ☐ Remove any "interesting" prescriptions from the medicine cabinet

- ☐ Stock extra roll of toilet paper in bathrooms

Day Of Party

- ☐ Morning: Prepare garnishes, cover with a wet paper towel
- ☐ Prep as much of the food as possible : Herb garnishes, Drain ingredients, Pre-cook any food possible, Take out butter & items for softening, Prepare spreads, Cut vegetables Assemble hors de oeuvres that won't get soggy, Crisp Bouchees
- ☐ Afternoon: Put out any signage, Last minute tidying and spot-check decorations, Empty trash cans, especially bathrooms, Assemble hors d'oeuvres, store on baking sheets in refrigerator
- ☐ Run dishwasher
- ☐ Set outdoor decorations & lighting

3 Hours Before:

- ☐ Buy last-minute items and ice. Store ice in freezer and ice chests.
- ☐ Empty dishwasher and set out bus trays for dirty glasses and trash
- ☐ Put away any valuables

2 Hours Before:

- ☐ Adjust thermostat. Cooking, guests, candles & stereo will generate extra heat.
- ☐ Get yourself ready
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1 Hour Before:

- ☐ Take out any hors d'oeuvres to be served room temperature

30 Minutes Before:

- ☐ Turn music shuffle off and crossfading on (for iPods). Start the pre-party playlist (30 minutes of songs before the party playlist). See Making Music.
- ☐ Arrange first hors d'oeuvres on trays
- ☐ Turn on and adjust outdoor lighting
- ☐ Light fireplace, if using
- ☐ Have your key friends, which you invited to come early, mix you a cocktail

15 Minutes Before:

- ☐ Light all candles, then adjust dimmers
- ☐ Fill the ice bucket
- ☐ Take any chilled mixers and garnishes to the bar, fill pitchers
- ☐ Remember: never put ice in juice and specialty drink pitchers
- ☐ Pre-heat oven, if needed

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