

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 addresses, 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
- Get yourself ready

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

Make and Share Free Checklists

checkli.com