



**Ontario Home Economics Association**

## *Ask a Professional Home Economist*

**For Immediate Release**

# **Tips for Easy & Successful Entertaining - Guaranteed**

by Margaret Dickenson, P.H.Ec.

*With the holiday season fast approaching, this is the ideal time to take note of my 12 tips and tricks for guaranteed easy and successful entertaining.*

1. In order to be relaxed and have fun yourselves, strive to make your entertaining personal, doable and memorable.
2. An occasion becomes memorable when all guests (family and children included) are treated like VIPs.
3. To make guests feel like VIPs, always, always include my “bookends” – hors d’oeuvres when guests arrive, chocolates before they leave. Remember, first impressions count – and that final chocolate will prove to be a well-appreciated parting note.
4. Entertaining must be doable. Indeed, every event does not need to be a dinner party. Finger-food events can truly mesmerize guests. Such occasions may also be more convenient for everyone concerned. Therefore, seriously consider a simple drinks party, a cocktail, a cocktail reception (with or without stations), or, in the summer, a garden party.
5. For guaranteed ease and success when hosting any type of finger-food event, apply my enticing but strategic “four-taste formula”: (1) hors d’oeuvres; (2) a canapé soup (optional); (3) taster dessert(s); and (4) chocolate(s). Guests are thrilled by the unique parade of culinary treats and often leave convinced that they have had virtually a meal.
6. Presentation, presentation, presentation – take advantage of those “free bonus points”. Avoid spending all your time in the kitchen. Focus on the serving piece for each element of your menu, and on how the food will be arranged (i.e. the food styling). And don’t forget a touch of pizzazz!
7. Enhance the decor of your surroundings to create ambiance. This need not be complex, expensive or time-consuming (e.g. groupings of candles or clear glass vases of different heights and shapes, filled with one particular item and of one colour: green apples, red pomegranates, pine cones, Christmas balls, etc.).

8. When hosting a dinner party (casual or chic), aim to make an easy but memorable impression by serving several courses. Quickly transform a basic 3-course menu into a 5-, 6- or even 7-course dinner by first adding my “bookends” (an hors d’oeuvre and chocolate) to the menu. Then, if desired, include a demitasse of soup or perhaps a sorbet, palate cleanser or Trou Normand before the main course – or both. The extra time and energy are minimal, and the results outstanding!

9. There are options. Entertaining for breakfast or brunch leaves the remainder of the day free for both the hosts and guests to do other activities. On the other hand, buffets allow one to accommodate more guests than could be seated at a dinner table. However, I tend to take the concept of a buffet one step further with my very practical and convenient “Station Stop” buffet. Here guests move to different areas of a home for each course, allowing the hosts to prepare and lay out much of what is required for each course in advance. Another advantage is that as guests move to the next station, the clean-up can be left behind until later.

10. Themes definitely generate great excitement and fun. Theme occasions also assist hosts in deciding upon the choice of food, drinks, decor, serving pieces, lighting, music, and even the dress code.

11. I certainly suggest doing some basic advance planning and organizing. Try to implement a series of tips and tricks to make the entire process of cooking and entertaining both doable and enjoyable. This could include working with already prepared basic recipes (homemade or commercial) which are components of principal recipes (e.g. flavoured mayonnaises, sauces, ice creams, pastry components, etc.). Do as much of the cooking as possible in advance. Lay out dishes and equipment in the order in which they are to be used so that tasks in the kitchen are reduced to more of an assembly process, with only some last-minute cooking.

12. Remember, it is up to the hosts to stimulate conversation, and that the success of a party can always be measured by the noise level!

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*The Ontario Home Economics Association, a self-regulated body of Professional Home Economists, promotes high professional standards among its members so that they may assist families and individuals to achieve and maintain a desirable quality of life. OHEA is a member of the Canadian Partnership for Consumer Food Safety Education.*

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