

Dinner party 101:

A small dinner party of six is my favorite kind of entertaining. You can do it low key or go all out depending on the mood you are in. I've gathered my tips for a successful dinner party. Here are my "rules" for an effortless and fun dinner party.

1. **Friends.** Invite a small group of six. More than eight feels big and four feels too small. Think about what the purpose of the party is. To introduce people, to spend time with old friends, and then plan the group dynamic accordingly. Ideally give people two weeks notice.
2. **Have a Plan.** Half of the work is figuring out not only what you are going to cook but then planning when you will cook everything. Plan the menu, shop early and make lists!
3. **Clean Before.** I try to give the house a nice deep clean two days in advance. It's a bad feeling when guests arrive to a cheery house that smells amazing and you realize you forgot to clean the bathroom!
4. **Earlier the Better.** Anything you can prepare before your guests get there means less time in the kitchen and more time hanging out with your guests. As a person who loves to procrastinate (I really work better under pressure!) this is one time where it does not work.
5. **Don't do it Alone.** If people offer to bring something, let them! If you're not in the mood to make dessert then order your favorite cake from a bakery. The goal is to have an enjoyable party and a stressed out hostess is the fastest way to dampen the mood.
6. **Think about your Guests.** Put yourself in their place. When they arrive is there a place for them to put their coats? Is there music on? Does the house smell good? Are there drinks ready to be served and a great appetizer on a platter. Are there clean guest towels in the bathroom? It's easy to get wrapped up in what time you are supposed to take the casserole out and you forget to make your guests comfortable.
7. **Plan Something Fun.** Besides dinner and conversation I like to have my dinner guests come prepared with something. Sometimes its a 3 minute speech, or sometimes I give them a one word theme and ask to come prepared with some sort of performance, think: poetry, song, or funny story. Giving people the chance to be creative is usually my favorite part of the party!

Source: Buon Vivant personal list

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