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WINE ENTHUSIAST[®]

MAGAZINE

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THE ART OF THE OPEN HOUSE HOLIDAY PARTY

If you're trying to corral people on Christmas or during Hanukkah, do them—and yourself—a favor and host a rolling, informal party so your family and friends can drop in to eat, drink and be merry as their schedules allow. Here's how to make your affair everyone's favorite stop this holiday.

SERVE HOT, KEEP COOL

Serve food that can last through the day, keeping backups in the fridge or on the stove. Use chafing dishes, hotplates or a heat diffuser. Instead of one big turkey, roast a few breasts that can be sliced throughout the day, and keep in mind that everybody loves hot gravy. Bake your lasagna in a few small pans instead of your biggest roaster. Soggy greens put a damper on the holiday spirit, so keep the dressing on the side.

KEEP SIPS SIMPLE

Offer one bubbly, be it Cava, Champagne or Prosecco, one white, and one red. Serving Italian? Chill down the Vermentino and set up the Sangiovese. Sliced flank steak on the menu? Max out with the Malbec. Have plenty on hand, so late arriving guests don't feel like the party is over when they walk through the door. Offer a selection of soft drinks for children and coffee for designated drivers.

SPREAD IT AROUND

Change up the usual dinner party atmosphere by using your dining table as the buffet, and placing chairs and extra snack tables throughout the living room and family rooms. Relatives may be on their way to or from dinner elsewhere, so have appetizers and snacks placed at strategic points around the house. And don't wait until the end of the evening to put out those desserts.

GIVE MORE

You never know who might stop by—or who just got back together—so don't get caught without a small gift for everyone. Keep an assortment of bottles of wine in gift bags under the tree, along with a few wrapped wine books and cookbooks. Who wouldn't love one of those?

—Mike DeSimone and Jeff Jensen

