

Parties Unplugged

"Fret Less and Laugh More"

Nine Tips for a Stress Free Party!

1 **As the host, you set the tone at the top!** Your guests will follow your lead so participate and have a good time yourself. If it's a dance party, set the pace and be the first on the dance floor. Introduce people one-on-one, offering interesting facts that they can continue to chat over. And if you dress the part it immediately signals "fun"!

2 **Never have enough chairs for all your guests!** Create energy by ensuring that people need to move around, from grazing at an hors d'oeuvres table, to stocking up at the beverage station, to sitting (briefly!) to chat with a new acquaintance. Unless you are having a dinner party, make sure that some guests are always "on their toes"!

3 **Create an opportunity for guest participation.** It doesn't have to (but could) be toasts and roasts or parlor games. But you can also have guests top their own baked potato, or choose accompaniments to mix in their hot chocolate drink, or sign a special guest card. Put your guests to (joyous) work and watch the connections happen.

4 **Design a welcoming environment by attending to details.** While no one thing is important, taken together everything counts. You don't have to be elaborate or formal but do treat your guests with care by setting up and being prepared for them. Transfer food from containers to dishes, break out some nice napkins, have spaces designated for specific foods or activities, place things artfully with a sense of style. One of my favorite compliments was from a friend who said "Realizing the effort you put in to this makes me feel really loved."

5 Start the anticipation early with the invitations. The party begins here and now! What to wear! What to bring! What to expect! I have to admit I still like to send and receive the ones that come in the mail, but whether it's an evite or an invite, you can set expectations early for a good time!

6 Keep the fun going for guests, even after they leave. Send your guests home with something: cookie favors aligned with the colors and theme of your event (see our "Other Fun Stuff"), a take-out cup of coffee for the road, a crafted memento of the special day, or a container of leftovers! Add a tag that says "Thank You for Coming" and let them savor the memories a while longer.

7 I'm a fan of background music. Softly and somewhat aligned with the party theme. It can often serve as an icebreaker to get people talking.

8 Plan the flow of your event. I like to start low-key and then, as things warm up, work up to a high point: the main course, or the main game, or the speech or toast, or the big dance. And keep some things out of sight for a bit of a surprise, like that signature desert! Such fun for guests to be delighted by what's coming next!

9 Make a list (or two!) to keep you on track. Besides the shopping list and the menu, don't forget the Day-Before list, or depending on the type and scope of your event, you might need a Week-Before or Months-Before list! Most important for me is that Day-Of list, that you should put together in advance that includes details like lighting the candles. (I know this seems blatantly obvious but when so much is underway you might actually forget...I know I have!) Then have a separate food list including when dishes need to go in and out of the oven and at what temperature (it's good to realize early on that some things need to go in at 350 degrees and some at 425 so you can decide how to make this work) and what time you plan to set out each item.

And always remember that the day of the event stuff, unexpected stuff, will happen so do as much as you can the day before so you can deal with the surprises!

**You can do it! It will be such fun! But if you need help with any of these...
Call us!**