

Helpful hints to get everyone involved in a family party

Two weeks ago we wrote about how to plan out your menu in advance to ensure as much ease and simplicity in preparation and execution as possible. This week, we've got a few more helpful hints for you:

Plan the quantities of food so that you'll have leftovers for a day or two. No sense going to all this trouble of cooking and making only enough food for one party! It takes no time at all to throw in an extra couple of potatoes or make two pies instead of one and after all your efforts—you will be glad to not have to cook for a day or two.

Try serving buffet style. If you have the space and an extra table—this can be easier for you. You can dress the table with a cloth and flowers/candles/etc in advance. You can also lay out all the serving utensils in advance, then just set the food out and let people help themselves. This may not appeal to everyone, but can make the life of the cook simpler!

Check your grocery list—ensure that you are well stocked in Tupperware, Ziploc bags, Saran Wrap and tin foil. Nothing worse than a pile of leftovers and nothing to wrap them with! Also, while shopping for the party, check on supplies of soap for the bathroom, toilet paper, candles for the table, make sure your barbecue lighter works and if you are barbecuing, check that the propane tank is full! One shopping trip is plenty—you don't need to be running to the store three times for the same party!

Make room in the fridge BEFORE the party—it is a bit of a pain to be rummaging around in the fridge at 11 p.m. trying to cram in the leftovers. For

Lori Gysel & Gerry Kentner



a few days before the party, try to eat up stuff in the fridge and get it a bit on the empty side. Leaving lots of room for food as it is being prepared and leftovers when it's all over.

Some of you may be aware of this feeling—you have just hosted a large family meal. The

entire family is there including a variety of kiddies. Dinner is over (and it was great, by the way—you did a wonderful job!). The family have cheerfully helped to clear the table. The kitchen is now overflowing with leftover food, serving platters and dirty dishes. Now the group has all refilled their coffee cups or wine glasses and moved to the living room to sit and talk.

Where are you? In the kitchen? Alone? Feeling sorry for yourself? And, to top it off—are you the one policing the kids who are battling over computer games and which movie to watch?

Well, how about filling up your coffee cup or wine glass, shut out the kitchen lights and go and relax for a while yourself.

After a bit of time has passed, stand up and

cheerfully announce that its time to get a start on the dishes and you could sure use a hand. People will follow. Once you have corralled several people and handed out teatowels, scrub pads and Tupperware, go back into the living room.

Is there anyone still sitting? Just poke your head in and say sweetly, "Sorry to interrupt, but while we've got our hands full in the kitchen, the kids are battling downstairs, they need some help sorting things out. Hope you don't mind looking after that for us!" (My guess is those people will get up off their butts quicker at the next dinner party!)

Have fun and keep cooking!

(Lori and Gerry can be reached at whatscookin@independentfreepress.com)



Tomato Soup with Basil

Ingredients

- 1 medium onion, peeled and chopped
- 1 tbsp butter
- 2 medium potatoes, peeled and diced
- 1lb tomatoes, peeled and sliced (or one 14 oz can tomatoes)
- 1 litre vegetable stock or water
- salt and pepper
- fresh basil sprigs

Method

Sauté the onions in butter, covered, in a large saucepan for five minutes without browning. Add the potatoes, cover and cook 10 minutes. Then add the tomatoes and cook 4-5 minutes. Stir occasionally and don't brown. Add the stock, cover and simmer 20 minutes. Puree the soup in blender. Reheat without boiling. Garnish with basil or add slivered chopped basil to the soup.

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