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# How to protect your furnishings when entertaining guests

Hosts open their doors to guests for various reasons. Throwing a party is a great way to socialize with friends and family or mark special occasions like graduations or anniversaries.

Hosting a get-together often requires a lot of work and, depending on the scale of the party, may even prove a considerable financial undertaking. But entertaining also subjects a home to some wear and tear, which can be prevented when hosts make protecting their furnishings a priority.

## STOP STAINS BEFORE THEY START

Choosing wisely with regard to foods and beverages can reduce the risk of stained carpets or furnishings. Items such as tomato-based sauces, red wine, beets, chocolate, and other dark edibles may be delicious, but such items also can permanently damage fabrics and carpeting if they are dropped, especially if the stain is not immediately treated.

Choose foods that will be less likely to stain. White wine and clear beverages will not cause as much anxiety as colas or darker beverages. Finger foods that can be eaten in one or two bites may be your best option, as such fare negates

the need for cumbersome dinner plates and the potential for foods to roll off the

If you choose to serve foods that need to be eaten with a fork, select shapes that are more likely to stay put. Flatten Swedish meatballs into patties, and opt for chicken wings instead of drumsticks. Choose a pasta that's hollow, as such pastas are easier to skewer with a fork.

It's also wise to keep food contained to one particular area, usually an area with a tile or wood floor that can be easily cleaned and cleared of stains.

## **COVER AND PROTECT**

Hosts who are nervous about damaging their furniture should invest in inexpensive slipcovers, which are made to fit over a wide variety of furniture, including sofas, love seats, recliners, and even dining room chairs. Select a material that can be washed in a washing

Slipcovers come in different styles. Some feature tie-backs to keep the cover in place, while others must be stretched over the fabric to fit more snugly.

In addition to considering slipcovers, move knickknacks or other fragile

yet valuable items out of rooms where quests will spend time. Ceramic collectibles or a priceless piece of art can be safely stored elsewhere until the party is over. This saves you the stress of worrying about items being knocked over or broken during the party.

Place a carpet runner or an area rug over areas of the carpeting that figure to get a lot of foot traffic during the party. This can guard against ground-in stains. Be sure to place small mats next to entryways to reduce the amount of debris brought into the house from outdoors. You can ask guests to remove their shoes, but keep in mind that such a request may make some guests uncom-

## **ENCOURAGE GUESTS TO BE NEAT**

Do not expect guests to clean all of their messes, but you can encourage them to be neat. Have plenty of trash and recycling receptacles around. Regularly check the pails to make sure they aren't overflowing. Put cloth guest towels in the bathrooms so guests can easily dry their hands. Provide a permanent marker or wine tag so that guests can identify their beverage cups and glass-



These party hosts are serving their guests red wine with spaghetti, likely culprits to causes stains around the house. A better choice would be a hollow pasta like penne, which is easier to skewer with a fork, and white wine.

es, which should lead to less waste and fewer empty glasses to clean up as the party progresses.

### **RELAX AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE**

Think of the reasons you are hosting the party. Realize that your house will

not be pristine after all the guests leave, but unless you turn a blind eye, it likely won't be trashed, either. Worrying about messes and damage will make it hard for you to have fun, so try to relax and the enjoy the party.

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