

Feeding Family and Friends

Written by AZFoothills.com

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Gathering together can be many things, joyous yet jarring, loving and labor-intensive, and meaningful, but still quite messy. Of course, much of it depends on your role in the event since guests and hosts will have extremely different experiences.

This can be especially true if you are putting it on yourself rather than using the services of a caterer, regardless of whether it's being held at a party center or in your house. The reason for the soirée will be varied as well, such as a Thanksgiving family get-together, a [birthday party](#), or celebrating someone's marriage.

Picking a Theme

Regardless of what the occasion is, knitting the group together by giving them a shared experience can make it something everyone will remember. Are you thinking of having a backyard barbecue? Well, if you have a pool, you can do it as a Beach Blanket Bingo and give a goofy award for the best Frankie Avalon and Annette Funicello.

Another way to go is with the good old-fashioned country hoedown theme with square dancing and the whole nine yards. If you're throwing a birthday bash for one of your children, you can make it about superheroes, a favorite videogame, or even something like a Pokémon centric design.

Planning the Menu

What the guests are going to eat is at least as important as why everyone has gathered together --- some might argue that it is MORE important. Hiring a caterer is one option, and so is bringing in buckets of fried chicken and 6-foot-long sub sandwiches, but many fond childhood memories can come from a favorite aunt's rigatoni and meatballs or an uncle's freshly baked bread and rolls.

Another factor to consider is to how extensive of a menu to build, and how to serve it all. Is this going to be for a wedding? A buffet-style service is a very popular choice because it tends to be a more affordable option, but a sit-down style with the server bringing food to the guests means that grandma or grandpa isn't going to have to stand in line.

Maybe the occasion is a high school graduation, where things will be far less formal. A potluck is a good way to allow family and friends to feel like they are doing something special for the guest of honor. This can be turned into a full-blown event with everything from appetizers to entrées with various sides or a dessert extravaganza where each person brings pie, cake, or cookies for everyone to share.

What to Serve to Drink

Another quandary when planning a party is considering what to serve your guests to drink. While many of us like to imbibe while we are relaxing and enjoying the company of those dear to us, there are also many who prefer not to drink alcoholic beverages for one reason or another. Maybe they are a recovering alcoholic or on medication that mixes badly with adult beverages.

We also cannot ignore the specter of drinking and driving. According to government statistics, [almost 12,000](#) people were killed in "alcohol-impaired" traffic accidents in 2020.

Whatever the reason, it's always good to have some non-alcoholic options or even not offer alcohol at all. That certainly doesn't mean your drinks have to be boring. In addition to soft drinks, consider offering some fun "[mocktails](#)" as well.

Post Party Clean Up

In today's world, environmental concerns have to be factored into the equation. For instance, did you know that the EPA estimates that in 2018, [3.8 million tons](#) of tissue paper and towels (excluding the bathroom variety) were used? Why not use [recycled paper towels](#) for cleaning up the

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inevitable spills that come with any party?