15 tips to help your guests feel at home when you’re entertaining

Entertaining is great fun but there are ways to help your party go with even more of a swing by helping your guests enjoy themselves and feel really welcome. If you’re getting ready to host a party, check out this post for 15 tips to help your guests feel at home when you’re entertaining.

#1 Check for allergies and food preferences

It’s always a good idea to ask your guests if they have any particular dietary requirements. Maybe someone has a nut allergy or are they vegetarian? If your guests do have particular food preferences, then make sure they know which of your food they can and can’t eat and maybe have some alternative menu options on offer for them instead.

#2 Timing

Sometimes it’s possible for guests to stay longer than you’d expected them to. If this bothers you and you prefer to enjoy your guests for a while (but then like it when you have peace and quiet and they go home!) then why not let them know in advance how long you’d like them to stay? One way of doing this is to say right from the outset when you invite them that you’re having a party from X time to Y time. That way they’ll know the end time but will still be looking forward to a great party.

#3 Delegate

If you know your guests well and are happy for them to chip in with preparing the food, laying the table etc, then delegate some jobs. Not only will this make it easier for you but your guests will probably be more than happy to help out if they know there’s some food and drink coming soon!

#4 Buy ready-made if you want

Take away some of the stress and cut down your workload by buying ready-made where possible. Depending on whether you like to cook (and what you’re good at cooking) it may be that you’d like to make everything from scratch. But, don’t feel you have to if you don’t want to! If you want to buy a festive dessert platter, ready-made gravy or stuffing, or a celebration cake from the shop, then do just that!

#5 Don’t run out

There’s nothing worse than running out of drinks or food. Try to ensure you have loads of both at home when you’re planning a party or gathering. Think about how many guests you’re catering for and be generous with how much drink and food you allocate per person. Many foods will freeze fine if you buy and freeze them within the best before dates and you can always freeze the leftovers or use them creatively in meals for the next couple of days.

#6 Set up a drinks station

You can set up a special area or even just a table or bar area in a corner of your home. Guests can help themselves to drinks so they don’t need to ask you for a drink and they can see what range of drinks there are on offer. They can also help serve each other so it encourages people to mingle!

#7 Arrange some games with input from guests

Ask your guests for some ideas on party games (that are appropriate and suitable for all your guests!). Suggest guests bring along their favourite games or some toys or art materials to keep the kids occupied.

#8 Music

Having some background music is always good for getting a party going or creating a relaxing atmosphere. Choose a playlist that’s suitable for the mood you want to set and ask guests to bring their own music or make recommendations. Choose a guest or two who can be in charge of the music so you don’t have to do this as well as everything else!

#9 Prepare what you can in advance

Try to make as much of the food as possible in advance so you don’t spend so much time in the kitchen whilst your guests are there. Maybe you could prepare some food the day before, or prep the vegetables in advance? Or cook a few days before and freeze it until you need it (remember to allow time to defrost it though!).

#10 Spare presents

Don’t get caught out by not having some spare cards or gifts. If you get given a gift that you weren’t expecting, it’s always nice to be able to give one back. Keep a spare emergency gift or two stashed away in case you need to pull one out in an emergency. Chocolates, wine or bath products make great presents for most people.

#11 Tables and cutlery

Guests generally feel more comfortable when things aren’t too staged. If your home and table set-up looks like a show home then guests might be more concerned about spilling stuff than enjoying consuming it! If your crockery, cutlery or glassware doesn’t match – who cares? Maybe think about using recyclable paper plates and cups if your guests won’t mind. It makes it easier on the washing up afterwards!

#12 Share the clearing up

If guests offer to help with the washing up or tidying up afterwards then don’t say no! Let them help you clear up and it will take less time for you. You’ll be able to enjoy the time afterwards without slaving away over clearing the table or doing the washing up on your own.

#13 Towels and bedding

If guests are staying over then it’s always a good idea to have their bed ready made up and some fresh towels available. You won’t want to be doing this late at night and your guests will feel more comfortable if they can flop into bed whenever they want without having to ask you to make up the beds first.

#14 The little finishing touches

Sometimes it’s the little things that count. Make sure there’s plenty of soap and toilet roll in the bathrooms and the bathrooms are generally clean with fresh towels put out. You could put some flowers or a bowl of chocolates (or similar) out where people can see them. Maybe give your guests a little parting gift for when they leave. You could offer some small party bags for the kids, even some leftovers for the adults! It doesn’t have to be big, it’s just the thought that counts!

#15 And… relax

If guests are confronted with a stressed out, worn out, neat-freak host or hostess then they’re much less likely to enjoy and relax. You want your guests to enjoy themselves so don’t sweat the small stuff whilst they’re there. You can spend hours (days, if you’d like) getting the house back to its normal clean and organised state after they’ve gone. But, whilst your guests are in your home, enjoy their company and have a good time yourself.

I hope you found these 15 tips helpful. Do you have any more to add? If so, let me know in the comments!