

EASY ENTERTAINING

Simple Home Entertaining Tips

By Cathy Riva

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"Party Girl"

(NAPSA)—Whether it's a New England clambake, a Hawaiian luau or a traditional backyard barbecue, these tips make it simple and cost effective to throw a party to remember.

Once you've picked the date and the guest list, you're ready to plan the décor. To kick off any fete, I recommend a conversation starter and an "Oh Wow" factor (that can be the invitation, décor or even a specialty cocktail).

Invitations are your guests' first clue as to the theme of the party. If you're planning a nautical-themed party, send the invitation in a bottle filled with sand. Carry the theme into the party with seashells as place cards and navy tablecloths. Flowers, such as sunflowers, daisies or chrysanthemums, are a beautiful, simple centerpiece.

Party refreshments should match the weather—light and easy. For example, serve a fresh gazpacho as a first course, followed by the BBQ staples of hamburgers, grilled chicken, veggie burgers and ribs.

Easy and healthy side salads include Spanish salad with mandarin oranges and couscous with apricot. And for dessert, try a simple bowl of ice cream dressed up with strawberries.

For the bar, you want to keep it simple, flavorful, colorful and fun. One of my favorites is Southseas



Refreshments should match the weather—light and easy. When planning drinks for your party, keep them simple, flavorful, colorful and fun.

Punch; just blend ice with a fresh banana, splash of pineapple juice and ½ bottle of Zima XXX Hard Punch. Serve in a pint glass and garnish with a pineapple wedge and an orchid flower. Serving beverages such as Zima XXX, that come in bright colors, is the perfect way to make a splash at your everyday get-together. For non-drinkers, try a hibiscus iced tea garnished with mint for instant refreshment.

To make sure yours is the party they remember—and always make time for—be sure to give guests a memorable party favor as a parting gift. You don't need to spend a lot to make personalized favors. Get out your old instant Polaroid and take snaps of all the fun moments throughout the party. Make your own customized labels with the date and theme of the party and give one to each of your guests.