

Holiday Entertaining

Sensational Parties Made Simple

(NAPSA)—The best holiday events are simple and center around dressing up favorite foods to make ideal party dishes. Here are a few tips for celebrating the season and pulling together the perfect party.

- **Avoid a pre-party cleaning frenzy.** Clean and polish surfaces but don't worry about the dust bunnies under the bed.

- **No need to overdo the decorating.** The best part of a holiday party is that your house is already decorated. Keep any finishing touches simple. For example, lay out festive holiday cocktail napkins for a punch of color and pizzazz.

- **Prep as much as you can in advance.** Use the day before to wash, trim and chop any veggies. Then, when it comes time to cook them, just pop them into the pan.

- **Forget a full bar.** An increasingly popular idea is to prepare a festive punch and a signature cocktail. Fill pitchers and add ice right before guests arrive. You can also pour drinks into glasses and serve on trays.

- **Plan a simple menu.** Mix ready-made food with tried-and-true homemade recipes. One simple approach is to have a self-serve buffet that features several variations of the same kind of food.

Best-selling author Stephanie Ashcraft's latest book, "101 Things To Do With Meatballs," offers a variety of party-friendly recipes. Holiday Meatballs are made with cranberry sauce and barbecue sauce and are perfect served in a cocktail glass or simply with toothpicks. Saucy Meatballs make a tasty nibble when served on top of crostini garnished with basil. Guests can even put



One clever idea for seasonal entertaining is to have a meatball bar with several delicious variations of this tempting party favorite.

warmed meatballs on top of mini-hamburger buns and make sliders topped with their choice of condiments. The idea is to make it whimsical and fun.

For her recipes, Ashcraft recommends using two brands of meatballs: Casa Di Bertacchi and Farm Rich. The Casa brand is available in Sam's Clubs nationwide and Farm Rich can be found in major grocery chains across the country. Both are seasoned, then seared and steamed in the traditional way. And meatballs are fully cooked, which means they can be warmed up quickly for a fast, easy and enjoyable entertaining solution.

"As a mother of four who loves to entertain, I survive on simplicity," says Ashcraft. "Center a party around a variety of dressed-up versions of a party favorite, like meatballs, and add some fruit and dessert for the perfect menu."