

Holiday Entertaining

Tips For An Exceptional Party

(NAPSA)—You don't need a big budget to host a great seasonal party, just a little time for thoughtful planning. That's the word from professional party planners who say people should anticipate their guests' needs whenever possible. That includes every aspect of holiday hosting, from picking the party date to planning the party music. Here are some tips to enhance your next party:

- Do a quick survey of your guests to determine which date and time will work for most. Then, send a fun e-mail or regular mail card to have them save the date.

- Especially during the busy holiday season, send out invitations—by mail—at least a month in advance. Sending paper invitations sets the tone for your event.

- If you don't have a bartender or server available, consider asking a friend to arrive early and help with the setup. It not only makes the atmosphere fun, but also cuts the prep effort in half.

- Make serving easier—and free yourself up to be a thoughtful, attentive host or hostess—by displaying food platters. This way, your guests will help themselves as they chat. Every 20-30 minutes, heat a platter of hot hors d'oeuvres and serve.

- For the menu, think quick and easy. Find a few low-stress recipes you can make and fill out the table with store-bought items. Artisan cheeses, breads or crackers with spreads, crudités or bak-



A little thought can help holiday hosts throw parties to remember.

ery desserts are easy to embellish to look homemade and gourmet. Be sure to ask your guests about any food allergies and be prepared for guests who are vegetarians or dieting.

In a similar vein, be sure to offer guests nonalcoholic options from the bar. That way, designated drivers or any other guest who chooses not to drink alcohol can still join in the fun. For instance, Fre alcohol-removed wine by Sutter Home is a more sophisticated, unique and celebratory beverage alternative for guests. The alcohol-removed wine looks and tastes like traditional wine, so it helps guests feel they are part of the merriment, rather than sidelined with a soft drink or juice.

The beverage is available in a full complement of varietals, giving the thoughtful entertainer a number of drink options—including the creation of delicious and festive wine cocktails.