



Company's COMING!

Seven steps to make your home guest-friendly at holiday time.

BY HELLEN BUTTIGIEG

Whether you are hosting overnight guests or holding a holiday party, if your home is cluttered, it can be a stressful situation. Prepare ahead of time to relieve stress and enjoy your time with your friends and family. Here are some tips to show you how.

1. Plan ahead. The most important step to stress-free hosting is to think ahead. Start planning as soon as you've set the date. Use checklists to free your mind

from the mental clutter of all the things you need to do.

2. Plan the menu. Shop for non-perishable items in advance and schedule some time just before guests arrive to shop for fresh items. Designate a shelf in the pantry and in the refrigerator strictly for food for guests, so you can find it quickly and don't have to worry about your kids raiding it.

3. Survey your home. Walk around your home as if you were a buyer seeing it for the first time and make a list of anything that needs attention. Focus only on the rooms your guests will see and don't worry about detailing family bedrooms.

4. Clear the clutter. Even the most spotless home can look messy and uninviting if it is cluttered. Start with the entry area and coat closet to make a good first impression and ensure that your guests feel welcomed. Eliminate all but the absolutely necessary items. A garment



rack in the basement or in a room your guests won't see can serve as temporary storage for all your family's extra coats and other items you remove from the closets.

5. Organize the guest room for over-night guests.

Most guest room closets double up for general storage, so they tend to be stuffed. Clear the clutter, add some nice hangers and hang a cedar closet freshener. Install a battery-powered light if necessary.

Allow space for unpacking by emptying a few drawers in a chest in the guest room. Place the clothes you removed in clear bins or in under-the-bed organizers in your bedroom until your guests leave.

Clear the clutter from bedside tables to make room for your guests' books or jewellery. Remove personal items and knick-knacks from the room and store in labelled bankers' boxes.

Store like with like wherever possible so you don't have a big mess of miscellaneous items to sort through when they leave. You may need to put fragile items in bubble wrap or packing paper. Place an alarm clock, a reading lamp, tissues and perhaps a phone on the bedside tables.

If you don't have an extra bed, pullout or futon, consider purchasing a feather bed (which you can later store in a vacuum bag), an air mattress that's easy to inflate, or keep an old mattress under your bed (covered with a mattress protector) and pull it out when you need it.

Reserve a couple of sets of linen for guests only so they remain clean and fresh. You can roll hand towels in a pretty



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basket or store them in a wine rack set in the bathroom. If you are having several guests, consider providing towels in a different colour for each of them.

Purchase travel-sized toiletries (or keep the ones you get when you stay in a hotel) and tuck them in a lovely basket by the sink. Items to include: shampoo, conditioner, hand lotion, disposable razor, hairspray and a room freshener. Thoughtful extras include fruit or other quick snacks, bottled water and flowers all arranged on a nice tray.

6. Get the job done. Involve the whole family in the cleaning, organizing and preparing. Another option is to hire professional help in order to get the job done quickly and preserve your sanity. Consider hiring a cleaning company, a professional organizer and/or a handyman, especially if the party is soon approaching and your time is limited.

7. Final touches. After you've cleaned and organized your home, add small touches throughout, like flowers and candles, to give it warmth and make it more comfortable for guests.

Do another walk-through after you're done to see how guests will experience your home. Now you can relax and enjoy your friends, your family and your home. 🍁

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