

Woman's World

12/20/2005 - "Make Your Holiday Party More Joyous"



4 Plan a "show and tell"!

Ask guests to bring something fun to share—like a snapshot or memento from a recent trip. "Ensuring conversation starters like this takes some of the pressure of entertaining off you and helps your guests relax, too," notes Loyola University psychologist Fred Bryant, Ph.D.

Tip! Leave some family photo albums out for people to browse through, which will stimulate even more conversation.

6 Try the automatic babysitter!

Let your kids plan an after-dinner activity, like a talent show or caroling. The benefits: "It not only keeps them occupied and out of trouble, it provides entertainment you don't have to supervise!" explains Moran.



7 Enlist an assistant!

Nobody likes to be the first to arrive, so ask a friend to come early and help—it'll take some stress off you during last-minute chores and make everyone more comfortable knowing they're not the first person there, says Jane Buckingham, author of *The Modern Girl's Guide to Life*.



8 Serve the happiest snack!

What is it? Nuts! "They're rich in magnesium, a mineral that's proven to instantly help people feel calm and content," says registered dietitian Elizabeth Somer, R.D., author of *Food & Mood*. Or put out a cheese plate—the protein boosts serotonin levels in the brain, putting you and your guests in a happier, more relaxed mood!



5 Seat strategically!

Assign your most talkative guests to seats that are in the middle of the table, says Debbie Mandel, author of *Changing Habits*. "By placing them right at

the center of the action, you ensure that they keep the conversation going, making sure everyone's comfortable and having a good time," she says.

The #1 thing that makes you a great hostess

Surveys show it's making guests feel welcome—"something you can't do while you're worrying about making every tiny thing perfect," says Mandel. Her advice? Remind

yourself of that whenever you notice your inner perfectionist cringing over something minor. "And since tension is contagious, you won't be the only one who has more fun!"