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SOUTH

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seasons of love

10 local moms making a difference

Fun in the sun

7 looks for your vacation

BODY AFTER BABY

Get your pre-baby body back

PLUS SOUTH JOHNSON COUNTY'S HOTTEST LUNCH SPOTS



SIMPLIFY YOUR SOIREE

Make your next party as easy as it is elegant

WORDS: MANDY PHALEN

IF YOUR CALENDAR FOR THIS SPRING LOOKS ANYTHING LIKE MINE, IT'S FILLED WITH SPECIAL EVENTS TO BE CELEBRATED. WEDDINGS, BIRTHDAYS, GRADUATIONS, SHOWERS, ANNIVERSARIES—YOU NAME IT, I'VE GOT IT ON THE CALENDAR.

ENTERTAINING ISN'T ABOUT PERFECTION—IT'S ABOUT SHARING GOOD TIMES WITH FAMILY AND FRIENDS.



There are all kinds of reasons to throw a party, and I find that no matter how busy I am, I can always set aside time for some type of celebration, be it hosting a large gathering to recognize a life event or pulling together the neighbors for a potluck dinner. Lucky for me, just like anything else, entertaining gets easier the more you do it.

Entertaining isn't about perfection—it's about sharing good times with family and friends. Whether you're hosting a bridal shower, family reunion, or other great reason to gather, you can pull it off with style once you prepare yourself with these basic guidelines for entertaining.

Planning for a Stress-Free Event: As you plan, remember this mantra: keep it simple (especially if you are throwing the party by yourself). Do everything you can to ensure that you'll be able to relax and join in the fun. After all, guests come not only to enjoy a party, but also to enjoy your company.

Invite guests in plenty of time for them to make arrangements. Allow 10 days for informal events and three to four weeks for more formal affairs.

No matter if you're throwing an outside barbecue or a sit-down soiree, when inviting guests, be clear about the party details. Everyone appreciates knowing what to expect, and the more details you provide, the less phone calls you'll have to field with people asking you questions like, "what should I wear?"

Get Help: There's no need to go it alone when it comes to entertaining. Enlist some friends or professionals to help keep the party easy on you.

If you're hosting more than 12 people in your home, consider hiring someone to help you clear dishes, replenish drinks and keep the party moving in a stress-free manner. You can find listings online, in the telephone directory or by word of mouth, but be sure

to ask for and check references.

Party Flow: First things first, as soon as your guests are comfortable, offer them refreshments. Be sure to have a few before-dinner appetizers to serve with drinks as people arrive. If guests are coming to your gathering right after work or a busy day, they'll appreciate a little something to chase the hunger. And don't forget to have nonalcoholic drink options available.

If you're serving dinner, allow about one hour for appetizers and beverages, but not much more. You don't want your guests famished by the time they sit down for the main course.

And perhaps most importantly, if something flops, don't obsess over it. Dwelling on party flaws will only make your guests feel uncomfortable. Instead, make light of the situation and move on. What they will remember is that you took time out of your busy life to host a party for them and that you made them feel special.

Rent Some Fun: It's amazing what you can rent these days—from chocolate fountains and snow cone machines to ponies and horseback rides. Adding something unique and creative to your party is an instant conversation starter, allowing your guests to loosen up and enjoy each other.



MANDY PHALEN, OWNER OF EVENT STUDIO, HAS BEEN PLANNING EVENTS AND SPECIAL OCCASIONS FOR MORE THAN EIGHT YEARS. YOU CAN CONTACT MANDY AT (913) 469-1850 OR VISIT WWW.EVENT-STUDIO.COM.