

## How to Be a Stress-Free Shower Hostess

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Tuesday, 22 April 2008

Over the years, I have learned a lot of things the hard way. (More than I care to list, actually.) But, the good news is, I haven't earned these gray hairs for nothing. I can help other people from making the same not-so-stellar choices.

When it comes to hosting a baby or wedding shower, the to-do list can get very intimidating. It is nearly impossible not to have something slip through the cracks even for an old pro.

But, it's OK because...nobody will know! Luckily, each guest hasn't been issued a comprehensive list of every tiny detail you hoped would be picture perfect. And, chances are, they'll all be having so much fun, that no one will care.

However, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, right? So, I have shared a few of my "oops" situations that should help put your mind at ease.

"Do I Cook for 10 or 40?"

Always put RSVP instructions on the invitations. Sadly, if you don't, most people will not think to contact you. Even when you do put it on all invitations, plan on hearing from less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the invitees.

It's not a terribly accurate headcount, but you'll at least have something to go on.

You'll also want to keep in close contact with the honoree to see if she's had any "word-of-mouth" RSVPs. Surely she's been talking with some of her friends & family & the shower has come up in conversation. Get her to give you the scoop on who's coming & who can't. It will help narrow down the guesswork.

"What? The fork?"

I forgot to specify whether or not each hostess needed to bring a serving dish & serving utensil with their food item.

The last place you need to be 5 minutes before the guests arrive is shoulder-deep in a sea of cardboard boxes in the attic desperately trying to locate that serving tray you got at your own wedding shower 27 years ago.

Either have more than enough vessels & serving utensils or be sure to remind each contributing hostess to bring her own.

A Very Expensive Donation to the Local Soup Kitchen

At the beginning of my shower-throwing learning curve, I served way too many different food items to keep track of.

But, be sure to offer an adequate variety because you don't want to go to the opposite extreme here either.

To avoid making a very wasteful & costly mistake, I recommend planning a couple of different "tiers" of food & making varying amounts of each tier. The logic behind these categories will save you money, waste less food & ensure your guests don't leave hungry.

For example, you might have your "elite" foods on Tier 1 that could include crab cakes, prosciutto-wrapped asparagus, cheese straws & an assortment of tea sandwiches.

These are your more expensive & more perishable (read:

less re-usable during next week) foods. Have enough of these for each guest to have 1 piece each.

Tier 2 would be your staples like a fruit tray & a crudite'

tray with dips (or chips & salsa for the Fiesta Shower).

Put these out as well, but also have extra of these

on-hand. When items on your first tier run out, replace

them with the extra stockpile of items from Tier 2.

Don't worry if that item is already on the buffet because everyone has probably already made their first round at this point. It will keep the table looking full, no one will leave hungry & if you do have leftovers, they'll be something your family just might eat over the next week.

I used to find myself stuck trying to convince my husband that he wanted pink baby bootie petit fours for dessert the following week, but I've found it is much easier to toss leftover raw veggies into the kids' lunchboxes instead.

I hope this glimpse into my shower-throwing past has helped. The above has cost my literal blood, sweat & tears as a hostess & I want to save you from shedding your own.

The most important thing I've learned over the years is to relax & enjoy the shower. After all, when everyone is talking about the shower after it's over, you want to be able to look back on that day & smile. Have fun!

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