

Glow

Cast a flattering light on your guests while illuminating your table after dark with these remote-controlled LED candles (outdoor candles, \$14–\$20 each, and remote, \$8; at Pier 1 Imports). Bonus: No worrying about open flames.



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to the flowers and display a bloom-free (but still size: Snip some basil and rosemary from your stalks in several vases.

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Invest

Think about purchasing collapsible card tables and folding chairs so you'll have plenty of places to set food and seat guests. Throw cloths



J

Jobs

Distribute the workload. Assign family members and close friends small tasks, like refreshing drinks, emptying the trash, refilling serving bowls and ice buckets and checking on supplies of cups, napkins and plates. If everyone looks after one job, you'll likely be surprised by how smoothly things go.

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Koozies

Give your guests a party favor they can enjoy all summer long. Koozies keep beverages cool and drip-free. They cost about \$2 each if you order in bulk from kustomkoozies.com. Personalize them by adding stickers and ribbons.



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Laugh

It's your party, so have fun! Be sure to mingle with guests and not spend the whole time in the kitchen. By planning and cooking ahead, you increase your chances of enjoying yourself.

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Mail

Set the tone with a written invitation. Guests might be more inclined to respond and attend if they get one, rather than just another e-mail invite. Send invitations two to three weeks in advance. You don't need to spend a bundle. This festive design comes preprinted, and the cards cost just \$2 each (peartreegreetings.com).



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Nibbles

Put out something for guests to munch on before the meal, but remember to keep it simple or costs can mount. Prepare an easy antipasto by slicing ripe tomatoes and serving with fresh basil and mozzarella, or mix cold cuts with slices of cheese, olives and roasted red peppers.



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