



How To Host The Best Backyard Summer Dinner Party

By following these top tips, you'll be on your way to impressing your friends and hosting the party of the summer.

Brigit Larson
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Hosting a party at your own home can be an enjoyable but also stressful occasion. But that doesn't have to be the case with proper planning and preparation. ESTATENVY found and interviewed top professional event planners to get the best tips for how to make your next summer dinner party a fun and relaxed night for all involved.

Choose Your Own Experience

Whether you want to have a fully thought out theme for your party or not, it's important to think about the overall experience for your guests. This can guide how you serve, what you

serve and anything extra for how the night will unfold. Would your friends enjoy a more casual dinner in an intimate small setting, or would you like to provide an upscale fine dining experience? It's up to you, but consider your crowd, your budget and your space when determining.

“One doesn't need to have a theme for a dinner party, but it's important to have a cohesive design and style that reflects the atmosphere and sets the mood that you want your guests to experience,” said Sandy Alvarez, Founder and Certified Planner at [Splendid Weddings and Events](#).

Notify Guests

Once you have decided on your guest list, you will need to give them plenty of notice to plan for your event. The summer can be a busy time for events, weddings and vacations, so give extra time if you're hosting a summer dinner party. Refer back to your theme or experience for the type of invite and time sent.

“I recommend sending invites out three to four weeks before the party and then allowing for guests to RSVP at least a week before,” said Anthony Navarro, Founder at [Liven It Up Events](#). “With today's world, you can invite through an evite for something casual. For something more formal, an invitation in the mail sets the tone and the expectation of the party,”

Plan Menu

What will your guests eat and drink? Your theme or style can again help you decide which direction you take. Consider having appetizers to greet guests and preparing food ahead of time if you are cooking the meal yourself while hosting.

“A trend I've seen is hosts will make the staple items and then supplement with food they have bought so they can enjoy themselves with their guests. Also in the summer, having a signature drink or cocktail that's pre-poured and set out for guests is a nice, unexpected touch,” said Navarro.

When should you consider catering your dinner party instead of cooking it all yourself? Alvarez explains, “If your party is larger than 10 people, I highly recommend that you hire a catering company so that you don't have to worry about handling the food and leave it to the experts so that everyone—including you—can enjoy the party.”

Plan Setup

If you are hosting the party in your own home, thinking about the setup will be key to the experience. If the party will be largely in the backyard, you'll need to think about a backup idea or tent to prop up if the weather is bad.

For hosts who are cooking the meal themselves, consider having the bar or an appetizer table near the kitchen so that you can still entertain and enjoy the party while you cook. Planning out where food and drinks will be served is as important to the over experience as the actual food and entertainment. From the start, guests should feel at home.

“Make sure that your guests feel welcomed and that you leave a warm first impression. Every guest should feel they are an important part of your celebration,” said Alvarez.

Add Entertainment

Besides the food and drink, you may want to include a few extra elements to your party to make it a memorable night for your guests.

“Entertainment always elevates a party or experience. That could be through pre-recorded or live music. To inspire conversation and bridge guests, you can also have walk around entertainment,” said Navarro. If budget allows, walk around entertainment can be a more unique addition to the party, such as a magician. These professionals roam the party and often bring guests together that don’t know each other yet.

Decor

This is where you can bring your party’s theme or vision for your night to life. Start with your tablescape and centerpieces, but also think about lighting as part of the overall mood. For backyard summer events, the type of lighting as the night goes on will be a big factor in how guests are feeling. Avoid any type of spotlight and use string lights for a warmer glow.

Once you have planned and prepared for the big night, don’t forget to enjoy yourself! That is really what any party is all about, and being conscious of all your guests and how they feel will contribute to a fun experience.

“A great host shows appreciation throughout their event by being attentive and detail oriented. You can make your dinner party even more memorable by giving your guests a party favor or small gift to thank them for being present at your celebration,” Alvarez.