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**En**  
**in a Hurry**

**EMPLOYED**  
**HOMEMAKER**



Texas Agricultural Extension Service  
The Texas A&M University System  
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## Entertaining in a Hurry

*Frances L. Reasonover and Mary K. Sweeten\**

The employed homemaker often entertains friends, business associates, neighbors and relatives. Simple meals and refreshments provide delicious and appealing food for company and make entertaining enjoyable and trouble-free.

### Planning and Shopping

Keeping your guests' likes and dislikes in mind, as well as your own capabilities and facilities, helps make entertaining easier. In any event, it pays to plan company meals or refreshments early and carefully. Eliminate as much last-minute preparation as possible. The meal may be as individual and as informal as the service. Delicious, filling food, easily prepared and attractively served, will make a hit with guests.

For a nutritious meal, include foods from the milk, meat, fruit-vegetable and bread-cereal groups, and from the group which contains fats, sweets and alcohol. Refreshments may consist of foods from any of the groups, but should include only a limited amount of fats, sweets and alcohol, which provide mainly calories and limited nutrients.

Consider foods that can be prepared several hours or days in advance. These include meat loaf, scalloped or casserole dishes, baked ham or turkey, salads and desserts, and fresh vegetables that can be prepared and stored in the refrigerator.

Many foods available are designed to save time and energy. There are frozen foods, frozen precooked foods, packaged mixes, quick-cooking cereals, hundreds of canned goods and ready-to-eat bakery products. They provide an endless variety in selection and should be used to save as much time and energy at home as possible. Keep basic items, such as instant tea and coffee, and dried soups, in stock and handy for quick entertaining.

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Use a grocery list to shop intelligently. Keep the list flexible enough to take advantage of bargains. Also, buy in quantity to save money and shopping time. If you make weekly meal plans that include the company dinner, putting a shopping list together is simple. Look over the menus and write down the items you need. Check the pantry shelf, refrigerator and freezer and add any needed staples.

As another shopping time-saver, list foods in the order in which they are stocked on the market shelves. Study the food ads for the day you shop, making practical substitutions or additions as you find them.

Here are a few ways to make meals look and taste more extravagant than they really are:

- Use visual and taste appeal with attractive color, flavor and texture combinations.
- Serve hot foods hot and cold foods well chilled.
- Take full advantage of herbs, spices and other seasonings. Occasionally experiment with new recipes when guests are not expected.
- Watch magazines, newspapers and television for ideas to “dress up” favorite foods.

Planning meals and refreshments and spending the food dollar go hand in hand. With careful planning, food costs can be kept to a minimum and meals made just as attractive and nutritious. Convenience foods sometimes cost more money, but the employed homemaker spends much less time in the kitchen preparing them.

Occasionally a crowd pops in unexpectedly. With no time to prepare ahead, a casserole meal is great when you can rely on ingredients from the pantry shelf and freezer.

Plan ahead for a party. Prepare and freeze as many menu items as possible in advance. For a small one, some barbecue restaurants barbecue meat or poultry for individuals. Many salads can be prepared ahead of time, except for the dressings. Also prepare and freeze pie crusts ahead of time. Check your favorite cookbook for some of these suggestions.

## Using Appliances

Effective use of small appliances helps make entertaining quick and easy. The microwave oven and food processor are two newer appliances found in Texas homes in increasing numbers. These appliances certainly are not a must, but do make food preparation less time consuming. Research shows that a homemaker using both the microwave oven and a conventional oven save up to 9 hours a week. This frees her for other activities.

*Microwave oven.* The microwave oven is useful for cooking or reheating foods prepared ahead of time. Such advance preparation and cleanup nearly eliminates dishwashing at mealtime.

*Food processor.* The food processor slices, shreds, chops and mixes food. Of course, these tasks can be done by hand, but the food processor saves time for the hostess, especially in entertaining large groups. Cube meat for shish kebab or make zucchini fingers and carrot coins for a favorite salad. Follow the manufacturer's directions to insure attractively sliced or evenly chopped and properly mixed foods.

A microwave oven and food processor could be used in preparing some of the following sample menus and recipes.

### After the Game Parties

Hot dogs\*          Beans\*

Bread\*

Iced tea or coffee

Chili\*

Beans or tamales (in slow cooker)

Miniature cornmeal muffins\*

Iced tea or coffee

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\*These items may be prepared in the microwave oven.



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Company Meal

Company style meat loaf with mozzarella cheese,  
ham slices and chili sauce\*

Scalloped potatoes\*

Green salad

Butterfly rolls\*

Iced tea or coffee

Open House

Appetizers\*

Party mix\*

Finger sandwiches

Tray of relishes - zucchini fingers and carrot coins

Shish kebab - marinated in lemon juice and olive oil

Fruit punch

## Party Mix

2 cups cheese cracker squares	1/3 cup butter or margarine
2 cups bran cereal squares	1/2 teaspoon onion salt
2 cups rice cereal squares	1/2 teaspoon celery salt
2 cups pretzel sticks	1/4 teaspoon garlic powder
1 cup salted cocktail peanuts	1 tablespoon Worcestershire sauce

Combine crackers, cereals, pretzels and peanuts in large 3-quart glass mixing bowl. Mix well. Microwave butter on high in small glass dish for 30 to 60 seconds until melted. Stir in salt, garlic powder and Worcestershire sauce.

Drizzle evenly over cracker mixture. Mix to coat evenly. Microwave on high, uncovered, for 8 to 9 minutes or until mixture starts to toast, stirring two or three times. Turn into shallow bowl or serving bowl. Serve warm or at room temperature. Makes 2 1/2 quarts.

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\*These items may be prepared in the microwave oven.

## Potato Cheese Wedges

1/3 cup dry bread crumbs  
1/4 cup Parmesan cheese  
1 1/4 teaspoons onion salt  
1 teaspoon paprika

1/4 cup butter or margarine  
2 medium potatoes, peeled  
and cubed (1/2 inch)  
3 tablespoons flour

Combine bread crumbs, cheese, onion salt and paprika in plastic bag. Microwave butter on high in small dish for about 1 minute or until melted. Drain potatoes. Coat potatoes with flour, shaking off excess. Dip into butter and then shake in bag with crumbs to coat evenly. Arrange on lightly-buttered glass plate. Cover with paper towel. Let stand 2 to 3 hours at room temperature. Microwave on high for 10 to 12 minutes or until tender, rotating plate twice. Serve warm or cold on toothpicks. Makes about six servings.

## References

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