



A Summertime Guide to Open-Air Entertaining During a Recession.

When a recession hits, it's natural to put the focus on your work and busy life. However, during this period, it's vital to take time to recharge your energy through exciting and engaging activities, and there's nothing quite like a warm weather gathering in your own backyard to bring the fun back into your life!

Keep it simple.

The party should be fun for you, too!

So whether you're grilling food for family and friends or hosting a party for a crowd, here are some simple, inexpensive ways to enjoy your summer and make your outdoor gathering colourful, easy and fun, regardless of the current economy.

Detailed Decorating

- Light up the party area with clear miniature lights. String them from trees, arrange them on the buffet table and even lay them on the ground in flowerbeds. Turn them on before it gets dark for a subtle transition from sunlight to dusk.
- Hurricane lanterns and candles in glass jars will stay lit in the breeze and make excellent decorative centerpieces.
- Buy small potted flowers and group them together in baskets for decorations. After the party, plant them!
- Be sure traffic areas, stairs and steep inclines are amply lit.
- For a beach-themed party or get-together, use colourful sand pails and shovels as serving pieces for side dishes.
- Stocking refreshments in a copper or metal tub, a wheelbarrow or a kiddie pool full of ice is a creative way to serve drinks.
- Terra-cotta flowerpots and galvanized tins can hold everything from pretzels and chips to veggies or breadsticks. Just line them with a bright towel or napkin and serve.

Food for Thought

- If you're cooking for a crowd, have a second barbecue on hand and enlist the aid of another outdoor chef.

- Two or more food stations will keep your guests from congregating in one place.
- Try one of the grilled entrée salads on the reverse side—they make a great alternative to traditional party fare.
- Keep a buffet salad cool by placing the bowl into a larger bowl of ice. Toss often.
- Discard food that's been sitting out longer than 1-1/2 hours.

Party Planning

- Never underestimate the value of shade. Placing food and beverages under a tent or a tree gives guests a good reason to take a break from the sun.
- Have plenty of water on hand. Remember alcoholic and caffeinated beverages can dehydrate guests quickly in the heat.
- Paper napkins can fly away in the wind. Think about setting out a roll of paper towels instead.
- Have insect repellent, sunscreen and the proper treatment for bee stings and bug bites on hand.
- Have a contingency plan just in case Mother Nature doesn't cooperate.



Consider a theme party—
it will help you create a
memorable outdoor event.

Servin' up Summer!

Summer Party Planning Checklist:

2 or More Weeks Ahead:

- Make a guest list.
- Send invitations or invite by phone.
- Plan menu.
- Decide on decorations.
- Make a "floor plan" of the party area, determining the need for seating and tables.
- Make arrangements for any items that need to be borrowed or rented.

1 to 2 Weeks Ahead:

- Do preliminary house and yard work, especially time-consuming tasks.
- Check to be sure all appliances are in working condition.
- Buy charcoal/fill gas canister/get oil for tiki torches.
- Make grocery list.
- Check that tablecloths and other linens are ready.
- Inventory paper goods on hand and replenish as necessary.
- Place orders for special flowers, meats or seafood.

- Begin making decorations and centerpieces.
- Begin stringing outdoor lighting.
- Choose music.

2 to 3 Days Ahead:

- Shop for everything but perishable items.
- Finish making decorations and centerpieces.
- Plan timetable for cooking and serving food.
- Clean barbecue.
- Finish stringing outdoor lighting.
- Set out and fill tiki torches.
- Assemble serving pieces.
- Wash outdoor furniture.
- Sweep or hose down patios and decks.

1 Day Ahead:

- Arrange furniture for party.
- Pick up any borrowed items, such as umbrellas, tables, chairs, extra barbecue, etc.
- Shop for perishable and last-minute items.
- Re-clean house and outdoor area as necessary.

- Prepare as many recipes and ingredients as possible.
- Thaw frozen items in refrigerator.

Morning of Party:

- Buy ice.
- Fill coolers with drinks and ice.
- Decorate tables with centerpieces, candles, etc.
- Prepare foods according to timetable.
- Turn off sprinklers and motion sensor lights.

1 Hour Ahead:

- Put finishing touches on meal, tables and party areas.
- Set out containers for trash and recyclables.
- Set out plates and cutlery on serving table.
- Turn on decorative lighting.

As Guests Arrive:

- Open wine.
- Light candles and turn on music.
- Set out plates of appetizers.

Cool Salads for Warm Weather Gatherings

These refreshing salads are great main dish entrées for any outdoor meal.

Grilled Chicken and Vegetable Pasta Salad

- 4 grilled, sliced chicken breasts
- 16 ounces pasta, cooked, drained and cooled
- 1 bottle Italian dressing
- 1 pint halved cherry tomatoes
- 1 cup sliced black olives
- 1 diced red bell pepper
- 2 cups snow peas or green beans, sliced
- 1 cup each broccoli and cauliflower florets, cooked to crisp-tender
- 1 cup diced mozzarella cheese
- 1 cup shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1 teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 teaspoon Italian herbs
- 1/2 teaspoon pepper

- Combine all ingredients and toss well to coat. May be served at room temperature.

(Serves 8)

Grilled Sirloin Salad

- 3 cups Italian salad dressing
- 2 pounds beef sirloin steak
- 1 pound new potatoes cut into quarters
- 2 10-ounce packages mixed salad greens
- 6 tomatoes, chopped
- 1/2 medium purple onion, sliced in thin rings

- Marinate beef in 1 cup of the salad dressing for at least 4 hours.
- Divide potatoes in half and place each half on double layer of heavy-duty aluminum foil.
- Cover each with 1/2 cup of salad dressing. Fold into packages.
- Place potatoes and steak on barbecue over medium heat and grill 15 minutes, or until meat is cooked (medium) and potatoes are tender.
- Turn packets occasionally; steaks only once.
- Cut steak across grain in thin strips.
- Toss with potatoes, greens, tomato, onion and the remaining 1 cup of dressing. (Do not use dressing from marinade.)

(Serves 8)

Mustard Grilled Salmon Salad

- 2 pounds salmon fillet, cut into 8 pieces
- 4 red bell peppers, sliced
- 2 zucchini, sliced
- 2 yellow summer squash, sliced
- 4 cups rotini pasta
- 6 cups mixed salad greens
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
- 2 cups bottled honey mustard dressing

- Brush salmon with 4 tablespoons of the salad dressing and place on barbecue.
- Toss peppers, zucchini and squash with 2 tablespoons dressing and place in barbecue basket.
- Cover and grill 4 to 6 inches from medium heat 10-15 minutes, shaking basket often and turning salmon once. Vegetables should be crisp-tender and salmon should flake easily with fork.
- Meanwhile cook and drain pasta as directed on package.
- Mix with 1/4 cup dressing.
- Add vegetables when cooked and toss to coat.
- Arrange greens on 8 plates. Top with pasta mixture, then salmon. Drizzle with remaining dressing and sprinkle with dill.

(Serves 8)