

Entertaining ideas for any holiday occasion

There's a lot more to holiday entertaining than Christmas dinner. It's the endless stream of other little events—the neighbors who drop by for cocktails and linger long into the night, the out-of-town relatives, the weekend guests, the open-house—that can take a toll on even the most resourceful cook. But don't worry: We'll see you through. For a truly spectacular meal, don't miss award-winning chef Suzanne Goin's festive menu on p. 40; it has a timeline so you can go all out without stressing out. And if you want to keep things low-key, the no-fuss holiday menu (far right, top) is sophisticated but not at all difficult. We've also pulled together several other ideas for any occasion the season might bring.

Be sure to check the yield on each recipe, as you may need to adjust it to suit your needs.

A light brunch buffet

This brunch is do-able because the recipes let you get a big head-start. The tart can be assembled well in advance, frozen, and then baked right before serving time. And the ginger cake can be made several days ahead. If needed, add a bowl of mixed fresh fruit to the spread, and you'll be all set.

Sun-Dried Tomato Tart with
Fontina & Prosciutto,
p. 94a

Arugula, Mint & Apple Salad
with Walnuts &
Buttermilk Dressing,
p. 43

Double-Ginger Pound Cake
with Brown Sugar Mascarpone
Whipped Cream,
p. 64

No-fuss holiday dinner

This sweet little menu feels special—no one will ever guess how easy it is to pull together. If you'd rather serve beef, feel free to substitute the Slow-Roasted Prime Rib, p. 44.

Roasted Cornish Game Hens
with Pesto & Goat Cheese,
p. 94a

Orange-Scented Rice Pilaf
with Fennel,
p. 94a

Roasted Carrots & Shallots
with Oil-Cured Olives
& Gremolata,
p. 46

Almond Biscotti, p. 14a,
with Vin Santo,
a Tuscan dessert wine

Weeknight company

With these dishes stashed in your freezer, entertaining drop-in guests is a simple matter of heat and serve. (Or in the case of the granita, scrape and serve.) If you happen to have a loaf of crusty bread on hand, it would make a nice addition.

A mixed green salad with
a simple vinaigrette

Spinach & Ricotta Lasagne,
p. 70

Clementine Granita,
p. 21

Casual entertaining for a crowd

To round out the meal, simply set out a loaf or two of warm, crusty bread and a few bottles of Chianti Classico.

Arugula & Radicchio Salad with Ruby
Grapefruit & Toasted Almonds,
p. 94a

Beef & Pork Ragù Lasagne,
p. 68

Caramel Turtle Bars, p. 74, and
Cranberry Streusel Shortbread Bars,
p. 75

Post-holiday supper

If roast beef was on your holiday menu, then here's a way to use up your leftovers in inspired fashion.

Prime Rib Sandwiches with
Roasted Garlic Dijonnaise,
p. 78

Green Beans with Tarragon-
Mustard Vinaigrette, p. 54

Chewy Cranberry-Oatmeal
Cookies, p. 14a, and
Chocolate Chunk Cookies,
p. 14a