

CREATE AN APPETIZER PARTY

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KITCHEN

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Whether we are keeping our holiday gatherings to immediate family or inviting a few others to join in, menu planning is on the minds of many. Hosting a holiday appetizer party offers an opportunity to enjoy tantalizing small bites and finger food in a relaxed, festive atmosphere.

MENU PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR APPETIZER PARTIES

The question I am asked most often when it comes to hosting parties is, “**How much food do I need to make?**” No one wants to run out of food especially early in the event, and having too much leftover can also be a problem. Although there is no one way to go about this, there are formulas used by caterers that are pretty spot on.

The charts below offer guidelines based on common catering formulas for an appetizer party that is not preceding a dinner. Amounts will vary depending on the type of food, the eating habits of guests, how many choices are offered, etc. Use this information as your starting point and adjust it as you see fit for your gathering.



APPETIZER PARTY PLANNING TABLE

- plan an average total of 10 - 12 pieces per guest
 - round up to next whole number

2 Guests	20 – 24 pieces total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 appetizers = 10 - 12 pieces per recipe • 3 appetizers = 7 - 8 pieces per recipe
4 Guests	40 – 48 pieces total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 appetizers = 20 - 24 pieces per recipe • 3 appetizers = 14 - 16 pieces per recipe
6 Guests	60 – 72 pieces total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 appetizers = 20 - 24 pieces per recipe • 4 appetizers = 15 - 18 pieces per recipe
8 Guests	80 – 96 pieces total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 appetizers = 27 - 32 pieces per recipe • 4 appetizers = 20 - 24 pieces per recipe
10 Guests	100 – 120 pieces total <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 appetizers = 34 - 40 pieces per recipe • 4 appetizers = 25 - 30 pieces per recipe • 5 appetizers = 20 – 24 pieces per recipe

AVERAGE QUANTITIES FOR APPETIZER PARTIES

- 1 pint or 1 pound serves 2 – 3 people
- 1 quart or 2 pounds serves 4 – 6 people
- 1/2 gallon or 4 pounds serves 10 – 12 people

Dips, Spreads, Fondue, Queso	1/4 cup per person
Cheese and Charcuterie	2 ounces of cheese per person 1 – 1 1/2 ounces of meat per person
Cocktail Meatballs, Chicken Wings	4 - 5 meatballs per person 3 – 4 wings per person
Nuts	2 ounces per person
Mini Desserts	3 per person
Fruit and Veggie Trays	Fruit = 1/2 cup per person Veggies = 8 – 10 pieces per person
Salads <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prepared (potato, coleslaw, whole grain, other) • Mixed Green 	Prepared = 5 – 6 ounces per person Mixed Greens = 1 cup per person

PARTY PLANNING TIPS

1. Decide on the “look and feel” for the party.

- Will it be a general appetizer party or planned around a type of cuisine, season, holiday, or another social event?
- Will there be a signature item or main feature such as a "build your own mini taco bar" or a variety of fun finger foods?

2. Consider the time of day the party will take place, the length of the party, and the guests attending.

- If a party is scheduled to run longer than 2 hours, consider having extra servings or additional food items available.

3. For variety, offer foods from different categories.

- Protein
- Vegetables and Fruit
- Bread or Whole Grain
- Dips and Spreads
- Snacky Items
- Desserts

4. Take into account any known food allergies or dietary considerations.

- What alternatives are available?

5. Create a shopping and prep schedule.

- What items can be purchased ahead? What perishable items need to be purchased shortly before the event?
- What can be purchased pre-made?
- How many items can be prepared ahead?

6. Keep food safety in mind.

Choose a hot or cold serving system so that perishable appetizers are not left at room temperature for longer than 2 hours.

- Have plenty of ice available – both for drinks as well as for keeping cold appetizers chilled on the serving table.
- Use hot or cold serving pieces, such as:
 - a [chafing dish](#) or crockpot
 - [warming tray](#)
 - the [Serving Center set](#) from **Tupperware**
 - [entertainment items](#) from **Pampered Chef**
 - or a piece from the [Professional Series](#) at retailers like **Frontgate**.
- Or, create your own system to keep foods cold by filling a baking dish or large bowl with ice and nestling the appetizer in a serving piece on top. Check the ice periodically, drain off any water and replace the ice as needed.

7. Check that all of the necessary equipment and serving pieces are available, in working order, clean and ready to use.

- Set up the serving table the day of, or one to two days ahead of the party.