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SPECIAL 2012 BEST OF YEAR ISSUE!



WINE ENTHUSIAST

MAGAZINE

DECEMBER 31, 2012

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HOW TO SURVIVE HOSTING ON NEW YEAR'S EVE

Wine Enthusiast's entertaining editors, Mike and Jeff, share their surefire secrets to throwing a memorable, headache-free fete.

With its tradition—and the small fact it supposedly marks the start of the best year of everyone's life—hosting on New Year's Eve comes with more pressure than all other seasonal soirees combined. To ensure stress doesn't derail the fun in planning, prevent you from actually enjoying the celebration, or sabotage the party for your guests, heed our little cheat sheet on how to usher in 2013 in style and with your sanity intact.

MAKE GUESTS AN OFFER THEY WON'T REFUSE

You don't want your year-end festivity to become the after-party or a pit stop for the ball drop. E-vites and Facebook invites can quickly spiral out of control on NYE as guests exponentially add to your headcount with just a few clicks, or suggest alternate itineraries, such as rallying beforehand at a nearby wine bar. To make certain your party is the focus, mail out announcements explaining you're taking care of all their drinking, dining and stroke-of-midnight needs. Receiving a mailed request not only corrals guests with silk gloves, it adds instant gravitas and sophistication, making yours the must-have invite of the season.

START HOSTING SOONER

You already know your goal as a host is to make guests feel comfortable and wanted. But why wait until the doorbell rings? We approach this prehosting duty with two tactics. First, we expand upon the oft-neglected party protocol, the dress code. Telling guests your event is semiformal, casual or "come as you are" leaves some guessing, which can create a touch of pre-party anxiety, sapping a few degrees of fun from your shindig before the first glass is even poured. Not good. Take an extra step and alert them how you'll be dressing on the invite. "We're wearing jeans and jackets, but ties are a no-no," or, "tuxes for the men, cocktail dresses for the ladies." Second, a day or so before the party, call or send personal (not mass) e-mails to your invitees, expressing how excited you are to see them. Do that, and all your guests will arrive already feeling like V.I.P.s.

SIP IN STYLE

Whether you're hosting a sit-down meal or a grazing affair, mix-and-match glassware works only if you've perfected the Parisian flea-market esthetic. And plastic? Well, that's for toddlers and swimming pool parties. There, we said it. Having uniform drinkware is the easiest way to ratchet up the top-shelf quotient of your get-together. And stemmed wine glasses, tumblers and flutes are less expensive than you think. You can often scoop up an entire case for less than \$20. The best part: If guests accidentally break a few, you won't bat an eye, further solidifying your status as the ultimate unflappable New Year's Eve host.

—MIKE DeSIMONE & JEFF JENSSEN

For more tips on how to host a standout NYE soiree, download our Ultimate Holiday Entertaining Guide at winemag.com/ultimateholidays