

GARDENS & OUTDOOR LIVING

Considerations for Outdoor Entertaining

Outdoor parties have a flair all their own. Entertaining outside means being able to enjoy the fresh air, sun and extra space that the great outdoors allows.

Entertaining outdoors may include intimate barbecues with friends or weddings with hundreds of guests. While parks, yards, and gardens can make beautiful backdrops for parties, hosts still need to emphasize preparation when throwing an outdoor party.

Select and Prepare the Space

Many homeowners host parties for friends and family in their backyards. Whereas other spaces, including parks, require the transport of food and other supplies, backyards offer the ultimate in convenience, allowing homeowners to cook foods in their kitchens and then carry items directly to the backyard.

Backyards are not always set up or equipped for events, and preparation will be required to turn the yard into a party-worthy area. Plan a day for cleanup. Remove toys, tools and debris. Be sure the grass is mowed and clippings are removed. Address any tripping hazards and make sure there is an easy path in and out of the party, as well as to the restrooms. Take inventory of tables and seating options and rent or buy extra seating if necessary.

Provide shade and shelter

Every party host hopes for good weather when entertaining outside, but it is best to have a contingency plan in place just in case Mother Nature does not cooperate. Awnings and patio umbrellas can only do so much, and it may be necessary to install pop-up tents or stationary gazebos to protect guests from the elements. Think about renting tents from party supply companies, which usually will erect the tents and take them down after use.

Even if the weather will be pleasant, have spots where guests can escape the sun. It can be uncomfortable and dangerous to sit in the sun for long periods of time.

Keep Food Temperatures Consistent

If you plan to offer buffet-style cuisine, arrange for serving dishes that will keep foods hot or cold as needed. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration's Center for Food Safety and Applied Nutrition advises that it is important to keep foods safe when entertaining outside. Cold foods should be kept in coolers or served on beds of ice. Use hot chafing dishes to keep hot foods at a serving temperature at or above 140 F. Refrigerate or refreeze foods within two hours or after one hour if it is above 90 F outside.

Plan for Insects

Entertaining outdoors means sharing the space with insects and animals. Ants can be a nuisance, but wasps and bees can be harmful, particularly if a person is allergic. Use repellent candles around the entertaining space to keep bugs away. Make canisters of insect repellent available to guests.

Home improvement centers sell bug traps to keep bees and other insects away from foods and people by using sweet lures. Netting on tents or a screened-in area also can keep guests comfortable.

Partying outdoors can be convenient and fun. But hosts still must take steps to ensure their guests have a safe and enjoyable time.



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