

Cocktail Party Checklist

A week-long plan for a home party of 10 to 50 guests. Do a little each day, and on the night all that is left is ice, music and the first round.



7 DAYS BEFORE · INVITE

- ☐ Set the date and the hours
three hours is easy to plan for
- ☐ Send the invitations
ask who does not drink, and about allergies
- ☐ Count your guests
the quantities on page 2 start here

6 DAYS BEFORE · THE MENU

- ☐ Choose two cocktails and one zero-proof drink
make one of them a punch you can batch
- ☐ Mix each drink once and taste it
adjust it now, not for twenty guests
- ☐ Add wine or beer for anyone who prefers it

5 DAYS BEFORE · GLASSES AND TOOLS

- ☐ Count glasses: two a guest
people set a glass down and take a new one
- ☐ Check the jigger, shaker, strainer and punch bowl
- ☐ Borrow or buy what is missing

4 DAYS BEFORE · SHOPPING

- ☐ Buy bottles, wine, beer and mixers
everything that keeps; the list is on page 3
- ☐ Napkins, straws, cocktail picks
- ☐ A tub or cooler for ice

3 DAYS BEFORE · ICE

- ☐ Freeze a block for the punch bowl
water in a loaf pan or a bowl, frozen solid
- ☐ Fill the ice trays every night
or order bagged ice for party day

2 DAYS BEFORE · SYRUPS

- ☐ Make the syrups
simple and honey syrup keep in the fridge
- ☐ Clear a table for the bar
near the kitchen, away from the front door

1 DAY BEFORE · CHILL

- ☐ Chill wine, beer, mixers and sparkling wine
- ☐ Mix the punch base and keep it cold
spirits, syrup and tea; citrus waits for the day
- ☐ Buy lemons, limes, mint and garnishes
- ☐ Set up the bar
glasses, tools, napkins, a pitcher of water

PARTY DAY · SET UP

- ☐ Squeeze the lemons and limes
a few hours ahead at most
- ☐ Cut garnishes; keep them covered and cold
- ☐ Pick up the bagged ice
- ☐ Punch into the bowl with its ice block
30 minutes before the first guests
- ☐ Set out water and the zero-proof drink
- ☐ Chill the coupes
in the freezer, or filled with ice water

DURING THE PARTY

- ☐ Refill the ice before it runs out
- ☐ Keep water and food on the bar
- ☐ Last call half an hour before the end
then coffee, water and zero-proof drinks
- ☐ Make sure everyone has a safe ride home

How Much to Buy

Planning numbers for a 3-hour party where every guest drinks cocktails. Always round up.

FOR A 3-HOUR PARTY

GUESTS	DRINKS	750 ML BOTTLES	ICE	LIMES OR LEMONS	GLASSES
10	40	3	10–20 lb · 5–10 kg	20–30	20
20	80	5	20–40 lb · 10–20 kg	40–60	40
30	120	8	30–60 lb · 15–30 kg	60–90	60
50	200	12	50–100 lb · 25–50 kg	100–150	100

Two drinks a guest in the first hour, one an hour after; 1½ oz (45 ml) of spirit a drink. The larger ice figure also chills bottles in a tub.

YOUR PARTY

WHAT	RULE OF THUMB	YOURS
Guests	everyone you invited	
Hours	first guest to last call	
Drinks	guests × (hours + 1)	
Spirit, 750 ml	drinks ÷ 17, rounded up	
Mixer, 1 liter	highballs ÷ 8	
Ice	1 lb a guest, 2 lb with a tub	
Limes	about one for each sour	
Glasses	guests × 2	

WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

Drinks: two a guest in the first hour, then one an hour.

Bottles: a 750 ml bottle pours 16–17 drinks of 1½ oz (45 ml), or 12 of 2 oz (60 ml).

Mixers: a 1-liter bottle tops about eight highballs of 4 oz (120 ml).

Ice: 1 lb (½ kg) a guest for the drinks, as much again to chill bottles in a tub.

Citrus: a lime gives about 1 oz (30 ml) of juice, a lemon about 1½ oz (45 ml).

Wine: five glasses to a bottle; sparkling, six flutes.

Glasses: two a guest, since people set one down and take a new one.

Water: a pitcher and glasses on the bar from the first guest to the last.

GLASSWARE

- ☐ Rocks glasses
short drinks and anything on a big cube
- ☐ Highballs
every drink with soda or juice
- ☐ Coupes or wine glasses
drinks served up, and spritzes
- ☐ Punch cups
or small tumblers, by the punch bowl
- ☐ Water glasses, on the bar all night

ZERO-PROOF DRINKS TO OFFER

- ☐ Shirley Temple
ginger ale, grenadine and lemon
- ☐ Bloody Shame
a Bloody Mary without the vodka
- ☐ Arnold Palmer
iced tea and lemonade
- ☐ Cranberry Punch
the punch bowl recipe on page 3

TOOLS AND SUPPLIES

- ☐ Jigger
- ☐ Bar spoon
- ☐ Ice bucket, scoop
- ☐ Citrus press
- ☐ Bottle opener
- ☐ Pitcher of water
- ☐ Napkins, straws
- ☐ Coasters
- ☐ Shaker and strainer
- ☐ Punch bowl, ladle
- ☐ Tub or cooler
- ☐ Knife and board
- ☐ Corkscrew
- ☐ Bar towels
- ☐ Cocktail picks
- ☐ Trash bags



SHOPPING LIST

[illegible]

INGREDIENT	1 DRINK	8 DRINKS	16 DRINKS	24 DRINKS
aged Jamaican rum	1 oz	1 cup (240 ml)	2 cups (480 ml)	3 cups (720 ml)
Cognac	1 oz	1 cup (240 ml)	2 cups (480 ml)	3 cups (720 ml)
peach liqueur	½ oz	4 oz (120 ml)	1 cup (240 ml)	1½ cups (360 ml)
fresh lemon juice	¾ oz	6 oz (180 ml)	1½ cups (360 ml)	2¼ cups (540 ml)
simple syrup	¾ oz	6 oz (180 ml)	1½ cups (360 ml)	2¼ cups (540 ml)
cold black tea	2 oz	2 cups (480 ml)	4 cups (960 ml)	6 cups (1440 ml)

Cranberry Punch

INGREDIENT	1 DRINK	8 DRINKS	16 DRINKS	24 DRINKS
cranberry juice	1½ oz	1½ cups (360 ml)	3 cups (720 ml)	4½ cups (1080 ml)
pineapple juice	1½ oz	1½ cups (360 ml)	3 cups (720 ml)	4½ cups (1080 ml)
ginger ale	3 oz	3 cups (720 ml)	6 cups (1440 ml)	9 cups (2160 ml)

24cocktails