

## Preparing Your Home for that Holiday Dinner - Get the House Ready

Don't leave everything to the last minute. It's all about planning. Start early, make a list and go over it often. It keeps your head clear, and you won't be second guessing yourself, and wondering what you've forgotten.

Clean your house ahead of time. You don't want to be vacuuming the day of the big event.

Set your table as much as a day before; it takes time to do this properly, and this way you won't be rushed.

Crowd control. Try and keep the numbers low; feeding 25 people is a job for a caterer, dinner for 8-10 on the other hand is manageable.

Organize your home to avoid unnecessary crowding in a particular area. For instance, don't set the bar up in the middle of the kitchen. Have the bar in one area, convenient to a cooler of ice, and the nibble table in another area. You may also want to set up small groupings of seating in different places so that your guests don't all collect in one spot.

Set up an area where the kids can go and relax and be kids.

Table talk. Buffets are best if you are using more than one dinner table, otherwise it gets a little cumbersome passing food around. If you want a family style setting, try having more than one serving dish of most items.

I prefer to let my guests sit where they please, but some common rules for designating seating are:

Use name cards, encouraging people to sit beside someone different.

Never seat spouses together.

Unless they'd rather be on their own, include the children as opposed to having a "kid's table";

Table Setting 101 - a quick guide to setting the table.

Forks go on the left, and knives (blades facing in), and spoons on the right.

Dessert fork and spoon go up on the top of the plate.

Glasses go to the right and the bread and butter plate to the left.

Special touches. Sometimes adding those extra touches can make a memorable gathering. Try serving a special drink in honor of the day. It also makes your job easier; you can have a pitcher already made in the fridge ready to pour.

Have some sort of novelty at the dinner table, such as holiday crackers. Everyone puts on the goofy hats, take turns reading their fortune and then shows off their prize.

At Christmas I like to make a table gift exchange. It's easy to do, just go to the local discount store, buy some random small gifts, wrap them and attach a long ribbon to each one. Place them in a basket in the middle of the table (this also doubles as a centerpiece). Everyone grabs a ribbon and selects a prize. The real fun is all of the table chatter as guests trade amongst themselves for the best gift.

What's in the center of the table? A centerpiece is important, but it doesn't have to be fancy or expensive. Here are some simple ideas:

Stagger some pillar candles and wrap the bottoms with seasonal vine from the craft store. Have a large bowl with a candle and surrounded by fruit or baby gourds. Clean out a small pumpkin and place a bouquet of flowers inside. Create mini candle holders by using baby pumpkins, add a candle and flowers.

## About the Author

This article was written for the team at marindreamhouse.com; happy to serve all your [Marin County real estate](#) needs. View all available listings for [Corte Madera real estate](#) in this lush community.

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