

PARTY PLANNING GUIDE

TWO MONTHS BEFORE

- Set the time and date of the party.
- Decide on a theme.
- Determine your overall budget (if you're like me, account for 30% overage).
- Think about ways to make the party special, like the décor, gifts, etc.

ONE MONTH AHEAD

- Mail out invitations. Of course, you can use electronic invitations from Evite or Paperless Post, but I am a stationery nerd, so I like printed invitations. Plus, I love adding special touches like envelope liners and coordinating stamps! Helpful Hint: include RSVP regardless if it is affirmative or regret. You will feel at ease knowing who exactly is attending, and will help when deciding on food and beverage.
- Order flowers from your local florist. A Pittsburgh favorite is The Blooming Dahlia in Mt. Lebanon. I've worked with her on so many occasions, she knows what I like, and even knows the spaces in my house that different arrangements will work. It's so much easier when you build a relationship, and they understand what you like. If you have a design that you like, take a picture in for the florist to work off of.
- Order other décor, such as balloons and signage.
- Rent linens, tables, bar, chairs, and glassware from a local rental company. This is key! Having someone drop off and pick up all of these items is so helpful, and it saves your hands from washing dishes all night!

THREE WEEKS AHEAD

- Finalize your menu and attendee count. I typically have my parties catered. Here is a little tip ... it always seems that it will be cheaper to make the food yourself, but if you price it out with local caterers, you may be surprised to see that it equals itself out, and you don't have to do the work!
- Source and order party favors. Since I throw a holiday party, I've always liked to gift an ornament or a mug that she can use throughout the winter. If it's a couples party, I have stuck with a small gift for the ladies, the men don't really care. They came to a party with an open bar!

ONE WEEK AHEAD

- If it's a sit down dinner, create your place cards. TWO This another great way to tie in the theme!
- Draft your "Party Day" timeline. This is essential when throwing a good party or planning a holiday dinner with family and friends.
- Prepare envelopes with cash or check for anyone that will be helping. It is best to get this ready, so if they are leaving prior to your party being over, you can just grab the envelope prepared with payment.
- Sit back, relax, and enjoy your party!