

# WINTER WONDERLAND ENTERTAINING

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WINTER CAN SEEM LIKE IT LASTS FOREVER, BUT ENTERTAINING AT HOME OR IN YOUR STORE CAN BE A GREAT WAY TO BREAK UP THE GLOOM OF SHORT DAYS AND CHILLY NIGHTS. HERE ARE SOME TIPS TO MAKE WINTER ENTERTAINING FUN AND EASY.

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## PLAN TO SIMPLIFY.

Focus on enjoying your guests and customers first. Instead of offering a full bar, serve a signature cocktail. Foods that can be picked up and eaten in one bite like cookies, dessert bars, crostini or sliders eliminate the need for additional flatware. Don't dismiss anything that comes in a jar because olives, tapenades, dips and chutneys can make an appetizer platter in a flash. Hire an intern or a college student to clean and clear; they will be cheaper than someone from a staffing agency.

## LET THERE BE LIGHT.

Combat the dreary winter doldrums with plenty of light inside. Several clusters of unscented white candles scattered throughout a space create flattering areas of brightness and cheer. When it comes to seasonal décor pieces, pick metallic items to add shine. Mirrors are also a great way to amplify and reflect light. Outside, strings of white lights or luminaries create a festive first impression.

## MAKE IT SELF-SERVE TO PROMOTE INDIE RETAIL & ENTERTAINING.

Instead of a labor-intensive dinner party, have a buffet. You can create a comfort station in your store where customers can fix themselves a drink and get a snack. Fill a large bev-

erage dispenser with your signature cocktail for a self-serve bar. Instead of serving cake or pie for dessert, stuff several pretty containers with different candies to create a festive candy station.

## GO GREEN AND BRING THE OUTDOORS INSIDE.

Winter decorating can be simple and affordable. Your own backyard or a nearby park has all the materials you need, so use nature as a way to bring the spirit of the season inside. Use evergreen branches cut from pines, firs, holly or boxwood to create centerpieces and to accent surfaces or group pinecones or berries in a bowl. Bare branches (spray-painted or au naturel) are perfect for filling large containers or creating height.

## GIVE YOUR GUESTS THE GIFT OF WARMTH.

Think warm and hearty foods like chili or lasagna as one-dish entrees or hot dips with warm bread slices as an appetizer. Drinks such as mulled wine, hot buttered rum or a spiced tea are perfect ways to warm body and spirit. A fire and throw-blankets scattered about invite guests to get comfortable. To create cozy scarves for party favors or store giveaways, use scissors to cut several yards of inexpensive fleece fabric into long, 6-inch wide strips.

ENTERTAINING DOESN'T HAVE TO BE EXPENSIVE OR TIME CONSUMING, HOWEVER CAN STILL BE MEMORABLE AND FUN. AND THE BEST PART? THESE TIPS WORK FOR YOUR STORE OR HOME. CHEERS TO THAT!