

# What To Do When You Host a Dinner

By Kay Bushnell

You've been invited numerous times to the homes of friends, and now it's your turn. The time has come return their hospitality. When you first made the transition to a plant based diet you thought it might be challenging to entertain your meat-eating friends. Now you know that 100% plant-based meals can be beautiful and delicious.

Some guests on your list may already be committed to plant based food while others might find the idea of such food disarming or even vaguely threatening. You still wonder, "Will my guests like the plant-based food that I like? Will they realize how much more sustainable it is than animal foods? Will they feel something is missing?" Here are some tips for successful plant based entertaining.

In her book, *Living Among Meat Eaters* Carol Adams says, "...simply let people eat good, tasty [plant based] food lovingly prepared. What better gift from our lives to theirs can be given?" Adams advises those who plan meals for a guest list that includes dyed-in-the-wool meat eaters to "show, don't tell." There is no need to announce that the meal will be plant-based unless you are asked. Then let your guests determine by their questions how much/if any detail to provide on the advantages of plant-based foods versus animal foods.

When guests arrive you might mention how pleased you are to be sharing some of your favorite dishes with some of your favorite people. All food tastes better in a relaxed atmosphere, and friendly reassurance that you love the food you are presenting (and hope they will, too) will help to put your guests at ease.

Social occasions are great opportunities to showcase a variety of plant-based dishes. A buffet featuring a diverse selection of your favorite dishes will tempt guests to try them all. The menu for a mostly meat-eating crowd might include familiar dishes such as pastas with delicious sauces and seasonal vegetables, a beautiful, flavorful soup, a salad or two, several vegetable or bean pates, and a sensational dessert to demonstrate that desserts and baked goods can be created easily without dairy products or eggs.

After their first exposure to the great food at your place guests will be looking forward to your next invitation. The second time around they may be more open to trying less familiar dishes. However, if you want to stick to tasty conventional plant-based dishes there is a wide selection in plant-based cookbooks such as *The Peaceful Palate* by Jennifer Raymond.

Keep in mind that many salads and soups and most vegetable/bean pates can be made a day or even several days ahead. Purchase the breads, and prepare as much as you can of the dessert the day before. For example, if you are making a cake mix all the dry ingredients in one bowl, the wet ingredients in another; then cover and refrigerate the bowls overnight. Combine the cake's ingredients and bake it on the day of your party.

Don't skimp on fat, salt, and seasonings. Set the buffet and table with colorful, elegant tablecloths, decorations, seasonal produce and greenery. Even very ordinary and humble dishes are magically transformed when they are beautifully presented. Relax and enjoy honoring your guests with your feast of sustainable food that is complete and satisfying in every way.