



the Ultimate Cookout Party Planning Checklist



2+ Weeks Before

- Make a guest list and send out invitations (set RSVP date to 1 week before)
- Test your grill to make sure it's clean and working fine; check if you have enough charcoal or propane
- Order any rentals – tents, chairs, tables, etc.

1 Week Before

- Plan your menu
- Make a shopping list based on how many guests you are expecting (+ a few more)
- Buy decorations and utensils
- Clean out the fridge to make space

A Few Days Before

- Buy groceries and any perishable decorations (balloons, flowers)
- Prep or cook any foods that can be made ahead of time (pasta or potato salads, coleslaw, frozen foods, baked goods, marinades, sauces, etc.)
- Mow the lawn
- Clean the house as needed
- Start decorating, if possible – put together centerpieces, menu signage, etc.; set up tables and chairs, weather permitting

The Day Before

- Set out and label supplies, serving platters, and utensils
- Prep food – form burger patties, marinate meats, cook any barbecue (like smoked or slow-cooked meats) that takes a while to cook and store in tins covered with foil
- Do any last minute cleaning – bathrooms, vacuuming

The Day Of

- Finish decorating – tablecloths, place settings, centerpieces, menu, etc.
- Prepare fresh foods and appetizers (keep covered)
- Start up the grill 45-60 minutes before guests arrive
- 1 hour before guests arrive, reheat any pre-cooked foods that are to be served warm (such as BBQ pulled pork or smoked meats) – warm in the oven in aluminum tins
- Grill sausages 15-30 mins before guests arrive; store in aluminum tins covered with foil
- Grill burgers and hot dogs as guests start to arrive, in batches of 10-12; store in tins covered with foil
- Set up the drink station – fill coolers with ice and sodas or bottled waters; set out fresh beverages and ice for drinking
- Set up the food tables – arrange sides and prepared foods (make sure everything stays covered until guests arrive)

After

- Send your guests home with leftovers in takeout containers
- Put away extra leftovers in the fridge
- Clean up – throw out trash, clean grill, tidy up
- Return any rentals