

coffee slushes to drop-in guests. "Serve with some cheese mousse, crackers, dips, and baked Brie all set in front of the fire," she suggests.

The Caterer

Kelven Book, a high-profile caterer in Washington, D.C., offers a myriad of creative and practical ideas for successful entertaining.

He suggests buying or making holiday decorations in neutral, festive tones such as silver, white, and gold. These colors can be reused for special occasions such as graduations, weddings, showers, and anniversaries.

"Lighting," Kelven states, "is probably the most important aspect of decorating. If you're on a budget, put out a few decorations, dim your lights, and place candles of all sizes around the house. It's festive, cozy, elegant, and romantic all at once."

He also recommends setting up a cookie-decorating table for kids and adults. Be sure to have small boxes

with tissue paper available for guests to take home their cookie favors.

The Chef

Chef Adolfo Garcia of RioMar restaurant in New Orleans always carefully plans his menu before starting home entertaining. "If I really want brussels sprouts, let's say, I'll start from there. Then I think about what would go well...pork, duck, goose, maybe. And then I think about the cooking method.

"If I'm going to pan roast the sprouts on the cooktop, I look for a dish that will be baked in the oven:

goose, perhaps, slow-cooked with apples and hard cider. To round out the menu, I try to come up with something cold that can be made one or two days ahead of time. Then I make a sweet potato casserole the day before, and I've got a whole meal."

Adolfo's most important advice, though, is take time to relax. We often get so overwhelmed that we forget what this time of year is really all about. So, whether hosting an intimate dinner, a kids' party, or a fabulous extravaganza, remember the holidays are a time to treasure family and friends.

KIM SUNÉE

GREAT TIPS FROM OUR EDITORS

- Roast turkey breast side down for extremely tender white meat.
- Keep carcasses of roasted turkeys and chickens to make rich, flavorful stocks. Freeze some of the stock in ice cube trays for easy use in sauces and soups.
- Foods Editor Scott Jones loves his Staub teapot (for warming and pouring sauces) and Silpat nonstick, reusable baking mats.

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