

THE NEIGHBORHOOD WALKABOUT

Story and photos by Tracy Beard

Planning a Progressive Party

The holiday season is upon us, so as you plan your holiday parties, consider this stress-free option: Instead of hosting a labor-intensive dinner party, split up the work and plan a progressive appetizer party with three to five other couples. This type of party seriously cuts down on the cost, planning and cleanup for each participant.

How to Plan Your Party

The most important thing is to invite people you enjoy spending time with. If you plan to include alcohol in your event, you may want to choose friends that live in your neighborhood so that you can all walk. Pick a theme or color for your party to make it cohesive. It is important to have a set number of attendees to ensure that each host has enough food, plates, silverware and glasses for all. Set a strict time schedule so that everyone knows when they need to be ready and choose appetizers and drinks that can be finished within a 10-minute window. (Room-temperature bites and pre-prepared foods that need just a bit of heating are best).

As the main host, you can either set the entire menu, the theme and the drink menu or leave it up to each host to decide for themselves. However, it is a good idea to suggest a few ideas or hold a meeting to collaborate together. You can opt to keep your party exclusively for those who will host or add others free to join the event without any work. Be sure to discuss whether or not the party is for adults only.

My Party Plan

I am doing a neighborhood progressive party so that everyone can walk from house to house. I will select three friends to host along with myself.



Each host can invite a “plus one” for a total of eight participants. Most people have eight of the same dish or silverware, but there is nothing wrong with mixing patterns or opting for paper plates and plastic utensils. The theme I am choosing is red and white.

House #1

The event will begin at my house. I am scheduling an adults-only party from 6:30–10:00 pm. We will begin at 6:30 pm and because it is the first stop and people may arrive a bit late, I will schedule my section for one hour. It will be winter so I am using winter flavors in a few of my drinks and dishes. We will start the evening with an Aperol Spritz and mini tarts with Brie, pecans, cranberry sauce and bacon. Two bottles of bubbly should be enough for eight people. I will use real champagne glasses with white ribbons tied at the base and red dessert-size paper plates. At 7:30 pm we will move on to the next house down the street. The hosts for that home should plan to leave about 10 minutes before everyone else to prepare for their arrival.

House #2

After a brisk walk to the neighbor’s house five minutes away, we will be greeted with a stunning table laden with wine glasses and two appetizers. I am suggesting a delicious Sauvignon Blanc like Nobile from New Zealand or one from Kim Crawford. I recommend pairing it with herb-stuffed snow peas and a plate of chilled shrimp. If your guests like to experiment, buy one bottle each of two different wines. Each bottle contains approximately five glasses of wine. At 8:20 pm plan to move on to the third house. Forty-five minutes is plenty of time for houses two and three.

House #3

The next stop is the heartiest portion of the evening. I’m choosing a few red wines that are less familiar, a Petite Verdot or a Petite Syrah paired with some delectable Chinese short ribs. The ribs need to be served warm, so they should be kept in a 150-degree oven or in a crockpot on low. Provide plenty of napkins. The next hosts should leave by 9:00 pm followed by the guests at 9:10 pm.

House #4

I am suggesting that the host or hostess prepare mini tarts made with a chocolate crust, vanilla pudding and a brûléed banana or glazed raspberry on top. Two drinks will be available, more bubbly and a toasted almond cocktail. Remind your guests that the event is scheduled to end at 10:00 pm but allow this host to leave it open for longer if they wish. *cont page 15*



Vancouver, Wash. resident Tracy Beard writes about luxury and adventure travel, traditional and trendy fine dining and libations for regional, national and international magazines and is a regular “Out & About” contributor to Columbia River Reader.

Ads removed for Archival purposes

Ads removed for Archival purposes

Feel free to change up the drinks and appetizers. The most important thing is that no one person gets stuck doing all the work and that everyone has a great time. Enjoy the holiday season. Following, you will find a few recipes for my party. If you have big eaters, double the recipes.

RECIPES



HOUSE #1 Aperol Spritz

2 bottles Prosecco, cold
1 bottle Aperol, cold
1 bottle club soda, cold
2 oranges - make large strips of zest with a vegetable peeler

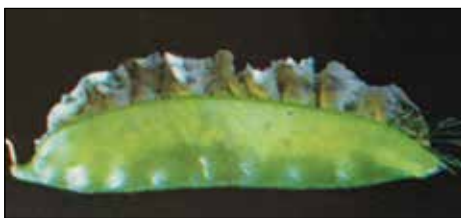
Mix 3 parts Prosecco, 2 parts Aperol and 1 part soda in a pitcher. Pour into each champagne glass and add one large piece of orange zest.

Cranberry Tarts

make 24 (3 per person)
2 packages crescent dough cut into squares
6 ounces Brie cheese – remove crust and cut into ½ inch cubes
½ cup toasted pecans, chopped
4 slices cooked bacon, chopped
1 can whole berry cranberry sauce

Preheat oven to 375 degrees. Unroll one tube of crescent dough into one long rectangle; press together to seal. Cut into 24 pieces; lightly press each piece onto the bottom and up the sides of an ungreased mini-muffin cup. Repeat with remaining crescent dough. Place one Brie cube into each tin. Place ½ teaspoon cranberry sauce on top of brie. Bake at 375 degrees for 10 to 15 minutes. Top with toasted pecans and bacon while hot.

HOUSE #2 2 bottles Sauvignon Blanc



Stuffed Snow Peas

Prepare 24 (3 per person)
4 ounces cream cheese, room temperature
2 tablespoons fresh parsley
2 tablespoons fresh dill
1 teaspoon fresh thyme
½ clove minced garlic
Pinch of black pepper
24 large snap peas – tip and tail

Blanch snow peas in boiling water for 30 seconds. Split rounded side open with a knife. Blend all other ingredients and place into a piping bag. Pipe the herb mixture into each snow pea.



Chilled Shrimp

Prepare 32 (4 each)
32 large raw shrimp (cleaned, peeled and deveined)
4 tablespoons smoked paprika
¼ teaspoon salt
¼ teaspoon black pepper
Place spices in a bowl and mix thoroughly. Sprinkle mix on both sides of shrimp. Bake shrimp at 350 degrees for approximately 10 minutes. Do not overcook.

HOUSE #3 1 bottle Petite Syrah 1 bottle Petite Verdot



Oriental Ribs

Prepare 24 (3 each)
24 baby back pork ribs trimmed of fat
2 cloves minced garlic
1 tablespoon grated ginger
1 1/2 teaspoons chili paste
3 tablespoons brown sugar
¼ cup molasses
½ cup hoisin
½ cup soy sauce
½ cup currant jelly

Mix all ingredients except the ribs. Pour marinade over ribs in a freezer bag and let sit for 8 hours in the refrigerator. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees and put ribs on a foil lined baking sheet. Turn once after 15 minutes. Bake for 30 minutes until golden brown. Place in a warm crockpot or leave in oven at 150 degrees until time to serve.

HOUSE #4 2 bottles bubbly (Prosecco, Cava, Champagne)

Toasted Almond Cocktail

1 ounce kalua
1 ounce amaretto
2 ounces whipping cream
Ice

Dessert Tarts

Prepare 32 (4 each)
Chocolate pie crust
1 box instant vanilla pudding
2 cups milk
3 bananas
16 ripe raspberries
¼ cup sugar

Buy ready-made pie crust or make your own chocolate version. You could also make a graham cracker type crust with chocolate wafer cookies, sugar and butter. Bake the crusts in a mini-muffin tin. Prepare instant vanilla pudding. Place one teaspoon prepared pudding into each baked crust, top with a slice of banana or a raspberry. Sprinkle liberally with sugar. Use a flame torch to brûlée the sugar on each tart.

...



Ads removed for Archival purposes