

Hosting a Summer Party

Once your house is all fitted out for summer, it's time to invite friends over. Summer is perfect for picnics, brunches and campfires — get-togethers that allow you to eat outside, serve light, fresh foods that don't require lots of cookies and decorate with flowers, colorful patterns or maybe a traditional red- and white-checked tablecloth.

BRUNCH

Brunch combines the best of breakfast and lunch. You can serve sandwiches, quiche, waffles, fruit, coffee, champagne, juice, salads and so many more light foods — try to avoid baking, at least the day of, to keep from heating up the house — and have seating outside to take advantage of the summer weather. [MarthaStewart.com](#) recommends using seasonal fruit and fresh-squeezed orange juice and serving foods in bright-colored dishes and vintage-looking wooden spoons. Decorate with fresh flowers or ferns.

PICNIC

Pack a basket and head outdoors! You can do this in a park, at a table, on a blanket or on the beach. You can go traditional with sandwiches, cookies, lemonade and fresh fruit or vegetables, but you can dress up a picnic too. Bring fresh, crusty bread and cheese, add fruit skewers and dip, put together fancy sandwiches and homemade baked goods or bring along cold chicken. Taste of Home recommends bringing a picnic basket and a cooler for cold food and beverages and packing your basket in the reverse order of things you'll need.

To make a day of it, bring croquet, bocce ball, a Frisbee



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or other games. Go at sunset or find a new, out-of-the-way park to enjoy the view, or go to a lake or swimming hole and work up an appetite with a dip.

CAMPFIRE

Invest in foods that can be

cooked on a stick. S'mores and hot dogs are traditional and shouldn't be overlooked, but sausages, vegetables, fruit, chunks of meat and even garlic bread can be speared and cooked over a fire. Put chairs or rocks

around the fire and keep utensils and plates to a minimum, allowing people to eat with their hands and get a little messy. Liven up your s'mores with different types of chocolate or by adding peanut butter to the graham

crackers. If you're less inclined to cook with a stick, make foil dinners with your favorite meat, potatoes, sweet potatoes, carrots or cauliflower and salt or pepper. Make sure to cook the meat before packing the dinner.

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FREE

The magazine cover features a family of seven standing in a grassy field. The father, in the center back, is in a military uniform. They are surrounded by four children and two women. The background is a lush green forest.

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