



October 8, 2020

“Cautious, flexible, and no shaming!”

-Sally

Dear Friends,

So many of you have asked about entertaining with family and friends during the holidays with COVID continuing to be a serious concern. What a quandary!

When asking about EE recently, many have said things like, “Wow, I guess no one is entertaining.” While we are not entertaining the way we did pre-COVID, many of us are still gathering. Never has EE’s Step Number One to *Effortless Entertaining* been so important to remember ...

*Dinner with Friends is not a Performance.
It’s a Gift of Hospitality.*

Maybe we’re not hosting dinner parties for 20 or cocktail parties for 200, but we still want to enjoy dinner with friends. For that reason and because people are cooking more than ever, *Effortless Entertaining* is alive and well and helping our followers more than ever “give the gift of hospitality.” Whether it’s a weeknight dinner for family or a weekend gathering with friends, EE is continuing to provide the strategies you need to entertain graciously, effortlessly, and now, safely. With the holidays knocking at our doors, the upcoming newsletters will offer specific ideas, menus, and recipes for entertaining with COVID. To lay the foundation though, I want to share EE’s ...

Ten Steps to Effortless COVID Entertaining!

- **Be a good citizen.** Follow your state’s guidelines with regard to guest limits and heed the good advice to social distance, wear masks, wash our hands, and be outdoors. Many of us are socializing and we are accepting that when we gather, we are at risk. No matter how hard we try to be safe, we could be potentially and unknowingly be exposing others and ourselves to COVID. How we gather may lessen the risk, but let’s just agree, there is always a risk. We only have to read the newspapers to be reminded of how easily the disease can spread. A good friend asked early on, “If you contract COVID and are asked about your activities, will you be embarrassed or proud?” Have we been careful or careless? Let’s all try to do our best to be good citizens and try to protect others and ourselves.
- **“Cautious, flexible, and no shaming!”** This was the response from a good friend when I asked her thoughts on COVID entertaining. We must recognize our own comfort level and respect and appreciate others’ comfort levels. If you’ve always hosted the neighborhood Halloween party or Thanksgiving dinner, maybe this is not the year you feel comfortable doing that. It’s okay. Also, appreciate that others may not feel comfortable attending when invited. Many aren’t comfortable gathering at all. Many only want to gather in small groups with close family and friends. Many avoid being inside and will only gather with others outside. Point being ... even if you want to have your annual Thanksgiving dinner, there may be family members or friends who may not feel comfortable attending. Let’s be gracious and understanding ... with others ... and ourselves.
- **Remember EE’s Step Number Two, *Your Friends are Excited to be Invited* ...** Let’s also help them feel comfortable. Let everyone know who will be attending, whether your gathering will be inside or outside, whether masks will be required, whether dinner will be seated, or a cocktail buffet. Let your guests know the COVID “ground rules” for your gathering. Send an email to everyone – children, aunts, uncle, nieces, nephews, friends – kindly reminding everyone of your gathering’s COVID norms such as ...

“Let’s not hug, kiss, or shake hands — save that for next year!”



*“Please social distance. Remember others may have greater sensitivity and less risk tolerance than you.
Let’s be respectful of everyone!”*



*“Wear your mask when talking to someone who is wearing theirs.
They are signaling their comfort level.”*

Let your guests know all the details so they can make their own COVID comfort decision to attend or not.

- **Get creative and think outside the box.** Be willing to break away from, “This is how we’ve always done it!” If you want to host a larger group and all the guests are local, consider a staggered drop-in where you have fewer guests at one time. Consider an afternoon dessert drop in. Host a “Hot Toddy’s and Desserts” party. Let your guests know this year’s gathering is going to be short, simple, and sweet! Even if all of your Thanksgivings have been a seated family-style dinner since the beginning of time, maybe you need to switch it up this year. Our family does an Oyster Roast the night before Thanksgiving with oysters outside and cocktail fare inside. It’s one of our favorite family gatherings. Look for more ideas, menus, and recipes in upcoming EE newsletters!
- **Gather outside as much as possible.** If you have outdoor dining or living spaces – patios and porches – consider how to warm those areas as temperatures drop. Patio stand or wall-mounted heaters and fire pits are great options for maximizing outdoor spaces during the fall and winter. The options are as varied as your space, style, and budget. Many of us live in climates that will offer temperate days through the winter. Take advantage of those days. Consider day-time entertaining when it’s easier to be outside when the sun is shining and the temperatures are a little warmer. Host an afternoon “Barbecue and Brunswick Stew” where guests are asked to “bundle up” to be outdoors. It’s fun!
- **Consider the safest setup and serving options for your home.** What is the safest number you can host? Is your space better suited for a small seated dinner or a cocktail/pick up dinner? Which areas can you best ventilate? Maybe your space is better suited for cocktail pick-up or fork-fare that can be enjoyed without sitting at a table allowing guests to move around and social distance. Maybe you have a dining area that is spacious and even better has windows that can be opened. Instead of a buffet, you may want to consider served plates.
- **Consider alternate venues.** Perhaps this is the year your family and friends gather in a larger space where you can either be outdoors or be spaced better indoors. Very popular in Charlotte are breweries with extensive outdoor space. I know ... this is really outside the box for those who like our seated dinners with our fine china. I think we might all be surprised how fun something like this can be. Dogs are welcome too! Maybe your country club or your art museum offers space that works for your gathering. Add a few items to the venue ... such as flowers, family photo place cards, and party favors to make it seem more like entertaining at home. Ask everyone to say a part of the blessing. We can make the gathering personal and special even when not at home. Remember... get creative and be flexible!

- **Move and purify the air.** If entertaining inside, open windows or doors. Allowing fresh air to come through will mimic to some degree the advantages of being outdoors. To purify the air, I am reading that [Air Purifiers](#) may make a difference. I'm not an expert on this, but we have two of these. I figure it can't hurt!



- **Create COVID Stations.** We now realize that handling the same items or touching the same surfaces are not our biggest risks. Having said that, we don't always keep our hands away from our faces and eyes. For this reason, consider COVID stations that include hand sanitizer or anti-bacterial wipes and disposable masks at the front door, in areas where people may be handling the same things ... i.e. at the bar where people may be handling wine bottles, liquor bottles, mixers, or where food is being served, and in the powder room.



You may want to add wine glass markers in the bar and kitchen. I can't tell you how often having my name on my wine glass has ensured I'm picking up the right glass when I've set mine down to do something in the kitchen. My favorite is the original [Wine Glass Writer](#).

Consider placing a small card at each station with ...

"COVID Careful Reminders."



"Kindly remember to social distance!"



"Please sanitize."



You may remember the attractive canister from Paysage that I featured for our anti-bacterial wipes. So much nicer than the plastic Clorox canister!



- **Keep the Powder Room safe.** As you know from my EE book, I think the powder room is one of the most important areas. In addition to making it attractive for our guests, we must also make it safe. Offer Individual paper hand towels and hand sanitizer. You may want to consider an aerosol anti-bacterial spray such as Lysol Neutra Air. Also, notice the attractive soap, lotion, and hand towels in our powder room from Paysage.

As you can imagine, I want to gather with family and friends as much as anyone. I also know that it's too soon to let our guard down. It's wise for us to consider how we want to gather during the holidays. We want to respect and appreciate that each person has a different risk threshold and comfort level. We want to do our part to be safe and keep others around us safe. Please send me your thoughts and ideas and stay tuned ... more to come ... ideas, menus, and recipes!

From our home to yours,

Dee Dee

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