

The Holiday's Are Here & It's Party Time

by Laura Dawn Lewis

Couples Company
.com

Party
Ideas



If you're like me, you love to give and throw parties during the holiday season. Yet coming up with new ways to entertain your friends and family can be daunting and doing it on a budget during a recession, imperative

Below are some of the parties I've either thrown or attended in the past that really made the season special.

The Heritage Party

If you live in a melting pot nation like the United States, Brazil, Canada or Australia you're probably a mutt like me. My father's family came to the US from England in the 1690's and my mother's from Germany and Poland in the 1850's. Within my own family tree my heritage covers England, Ireland, Scotland, Sweden, Poland, Germany and Holland. My boyfriend is first generation American and his family moved here in 1962. His parents were Lutheran missionaries and his family history is Italian, Greek and Jordanian. Between the two of us we cover about a quarter of the world's cultures and represent a wide variety of foods, customs and holiday traditions.

The Heritage Party allows you to explore other cultures and your own personal history with friends and family. It also allows you to include persons of other faiths and learn about their traditions and holiday celebrations. This party is a potluck and a gift exchange.

Here's how it works.

Each person brings two items with them representing a culture from his or her heritage. One of these is a traditional food of that country. The second item is an ornament or party favor. For example in Mexico piñata's are big. English poppers are a British tradition and distributed to guests at mealtime. Each opens with a "pop" and is filled with confetti and a paper crown. Bring a tradition you don't mind giving away as your tradition will be exchanged for another item later on.

You'll need a display table to showcase each item each person brings in. One of the games is trying to guess which country the item represents. This is hidden until after the game is over but each person will look at the items and write down their guess. The person who guesses the most countries correctly wins a small prize. The game concludes with each person telling the story behind their item and the drawing of the gift exchange. Each item has a number and each guest draws a number out of the hat and gets to take home a tradition from another country.

For the food, I always include the name of the dish, a short description of its significance and the flag of the country it represents. I also print off the recipe so people can take it them. I ask my guests to do the same.

You can take this even further by making it a costume party or a role playing party where you pretend to be a person from that country for the evening, bad accents and all. The Heritage Party is fun, educational and provides some interesting insight into the people you know and love.

Ornamental Tea (or Wine) Party

We have a tradition in my family of giving an ornament every year to each other, which represents that year's adventures to us. Last year I gave several ornamental American flags to signify the events of that year. This year I haven't quite decided what represents the year best!

When we've done ornament parties, we combine the event with a tea tasting, (you could also do wine tasting or a microbrew theme too). Each of us brings our favorite tea blend and a wrapped ornament. Like the above party, each wrapped ornament is given a number and guests draw a number out of a hat. The ornament's are distributed and unwrapped. Now the fun begins. We mix it with blackjack and proceed to work our way through each others ornaments, highest score has the option to trade for another ornament or keep the one they have. As each person attains the ornament they want, they have the option of dropping out of the game. In the end everyone goes home with a new ornament and a story to tell about how they got it and what it means.

The Christmas Cookie Party

Every person brings a batch of their favorite homemade Christmas Cookies and its recipe. These are then distributed to each party guest so that everyone brings home a completely unique tray of Christmas goodies and new recipes for the following year.

Caroling Party

Kids love this one and many times Church groups will organize caroling parties. Basically you all get together and walk the neighborhood singing your favorite Christmas Songs, spreading cheer and looking at the lights...Just don't forget the sheet music. Most people only know one verse of even the most popular songs!

Charity Party

Pick a charity and make admittance to the party contingent on bringing either a donation, gift, toy or blanket. The next day take the donations to your charity of choice. We also create a huge Christmas card that everyone signs with a short message. The charity we usually pick is generally a retirement home and seeing the retired people's faces light up when you show up with the gifts and the cards and spend some time visiting is truly inspirational. So many are forgotten during the holidays and most people focus on children and forget the elderly

The Scavenger Hunt

We hide a \$50, \$20 and \$10 bill (or gift certificates) somewhere and create a list of clues for people to follow in order to find the money based upon holiday trivia and Bible versus. The person who finds the money, keeps the money. It's a great way to get people involved and it can be combined with a progressive dinner for added entertainment.

The Gratitude Party

This is really just a dinner party with a twist. Each guest writes a short note about what they are grateful for and why. These are then put into a box and drawn out and read by others. After each is read, the table tries to guess who wrote the note. Expect tears of joy and good feelings from this. It's the perfect table conversation for a special dinner and focus' everyone on what is wonderful in his or her life.

The holidays mean friends and family, contemplation of the gifts life has given and anticipation of a new year yet to come. Each of these parties gives you the opportunity to share the joy and inspiration with others during this festive and special time of year.

Happy Holidays!

