

THE SALONNIÈRE

I FEEL A PARTY COMING ON

THE SALONNIÈRE'S ULTIMATE PARTY-PLANNING CHECKLIST

6-12 WEEKS BEFORE THE PARTY

- Set the date and time.
 - *Quick Tip: See what else is happening in town and avoid conflicts where possible.*
 - *Quick Tip: For an extra festive touch, host your party when the [moon](#) is full.*
- Determine the theme and look and feel of your party.
- Determine your budget.
- Select and reserve the venue if you won't be hosting your party at home.
 - *Quick Tip: Choose a space that's a touch too small for the number of people you'll be hosting so your party feels full and lively.*
- Select and book your vendors, e.g., caterer, florist, valet, etc. Check [Les Pages](#), our merit-based vendor guide, for a list of event partners you can trust.
- Compile your [guest list](#).
 - *Quick Tip: Over-invite. Twenty percent of those on your list won't be able to attend, and 10 percent of those who say they'll attend won't.*
- Send out a save-the-date card 8-12 weeks in advance if your party will take place during a busy entertaining season.
- Order your invitations if you're having them printed.

- *Quick Tip: Ask your printer to print the envelopes first so you can address and stamp them early.*

4-6 WEEKS BEFORE THE PARTY

- Create a master list of everything you'll need for the party.
 - *Quick Tip: To make your party planning easier, arrange your list in categories of what you'll need to **buy, borrow, rent, and do.***
- Determine your party décor and floral design.
 - *Quick Tip: Include elements of surprise throughout the party. For example, if you're hosting a Great Gatsby party, buy magazines from the '20s on eBay and place them in stacks on your coffee table.*
 - *Quick Tip: An abundance of any one single element, whether votive candles or gold holiday ornaments, always makes a powerful impact.*
- Do a walkthrough of the party space, imagining how the event will flow from the moment guests arrive to when they leave. Add to your master list any additional things you'll need to buy, borrow, rent, or do, e.g., hire a valet company, sweep the entry, etc.
- Reserve any rental items, including tables, chairs, glassware, dinnerware, and linens.
- Order any long-lead items, such as custom cocktail napkins and guest towels.
- Select and order stamps if your invitations will be mailed.
 - *Quick Tip: Set a festive tone by using a stamp that communicates your party's theme. Check out the options at the [post office](#) or make your own [here](#).*
- Determine the menu, including a [signature cocktail](#) to serve at the beginning of the party to set the party's mood and vibe.
- Select and order place cards if you're having a seated dinner.
- Address your envelopes or send them to a calligrapher.
- Select and order your party favors if applicable.

2-4 WEEKS BEFORE THE PARTY

- Send out your invitations.
 - *Quick Tip: For large or holiday parties, send out your invitations at least four weeks in advance. For small or casual parties, two weeks in advance is fine. Printed invitations are lovely, but [Paperless Post](#) invitations and phone calls have their place too.*
- Do another physical walkthrough of the party. Update your master list of to-dos.

- Begin compiling your [playlist](#) and/or discuss your music preferences with your DJ or band.
- Finalize your menu and develop a cooking timeline so you can prepare as much ahead of time as possible.
 - *Quick Tip: If you're cooking, do a dress rehearsal with your menu. You don't want your party to be the first time you're trying out a recipe.*
- Decide on your outfit for the party and try it on from head to toe. Arrange for any necessary repairs.
- Book any necessary [pre-party beauty appointments](#): hair, makeup, manicure, etc.
 - *Quick Tip: Save the massage for the day after the party. You don't want to feel groggy during the party.*
- Make any necessary childcare and pet care arrangements.

1-2 WEEKS BEFORE THE PARTY

- If you need to get an accurate headcount, contact any guests who have not yet replied.
- Do a mental walkthrough of the party and update your master list.
- Purchase any necessary short-lead items such as a [votive candle](#) and hand soap for the powder room.
 - *Quick Tip: Select a fragrance that will appeal to men and women; nothing too floral.*
- Set out all the items that you'll be using at the party, e.g., plates, glasses, flatware, serving pieces, linens, etc. Polish any silver items and launder and press your linens.
- Finalize and test your playlist. Make any necessary adjustments to the flow or song choices.
 - *Quick Tip: Organize your songs so you'll hear softer music during dinner and livelier music before and after.*
- Confirm all vendors and vendor details.
 - *Quick Tip: Arrange for the flowers to be delivered no more than a few hours before the party so they will look their best.*

THE WEEK OF THE PARTY

- If you're using a caterer, provide them with a final head count.
- Plan your [seating](#) if you're having a sit-down dinner.

- Purchase the wine and spirits.
- Put together your party favors if you'll be providing them.
- Make sure your heating and air-conditioning systems, fireplaces, outdoor lighting, and AV systems are all working properly.
 - *Quick Tip: If you're having a large party, cool the space to 65 or 70 degrees before guests arrive. It will heat up quickly.*
- Clean out the coat closet to make room for your guests' coats.
- Rearrange any furniture, making sure you have a table by every chair so guests have a place to set down their drinks.
- Clean the windows throughout the house or at least in the rooms where you'll be entertaining.
- Try on your party outfit one last time to make sure everything is as it should be.
- Prepare checks for any vendors who will require payment on the day of the party.
 - *Quick Tip: Place vendor checks in labeled envelopes for easy distribution and store them in a safe and convenient place.*
- If you're having a large party, let your neighbors know what to expect with the timing, number of people, and parking and, if you can, invite them to stop by for a cocktail.

THE DAY BEFORE THE PARTY

- Do a final physical walkthrough of the party space; imagine the party from start to finish. At this point, you should not have any open items on your master list.
- Wash and dry all tableware, flatware, serving pieces, and glasses.
- Give your heating and air conditioning, fireplaces, outdoor lighting, and AV systems one final check.
- Grocery shop for any perishable and last-minute items. Make sure the icemaker is working. If not, buy ice.
- Write down your full menu on an index card and tape it to the counter top for easy access. You don't want to forget to prepare or serve any items.
- Begin preparing your meal.
- Check that the bulbs are all working in your lamps. Click [here](#) for tips on party lighting.
- Place the candles you'll be using around the house.

- If you will be making a toast at dinner, think about what you'd like to say and practice delivering it.
- Get a manicure and pedicure.
- Go to the cash machine and get cash for tips for the caterer, valet, DJ, etc., and put them in envelopes in a safe place so they're ready to be handed out at the end of the night.
- Chat with your party co-host(s) about roles at the party, who will be attending, and any special considerations to note.
- If you're having a sit-down dinner, write out your place cards and finalize the seating plan. Set the table and lay out the place cards.
- Unless a photographer will be shooting your party, clear out space on your iPhone or camera's memory card so you'll have plenty of space for photos. Click [here](#) for a professional photographer's tips for taking great tabletop photos.
- Get a good night's rest.

PARTY DAY

- Clean the house or have it cleaned.
- Walk room-to-room through the house. Put away any valuable or personal items, fluff the pillows, and put any finishing touches on the décor.
- Purchase and arrange your flowers or have them delivered.
 - *Quick Tip: Need a last-minute floral arrangement? Head to the grocery store, buy bunches of flowers, and deconstruct them to create arrangements of flowers in a single color.*
- Continue preparing your meal or work with your caterer to organize the service. Take out anything that needs to be served at room temperature.
- Chill the wine. White wines should be chilled at least two hours in advance.
 - *Quick Tip: To chill wine quickly, simply place the bottle in a bucket of ice water for 20-30 minutes.*
- Set up the bar, i.e., slice the fruit.
- Make sure all your serving pieces are out and accessible to you or your caterer.
- Set out the party favors.
- Prep the [powder room](#) to make sure it's party-ready.

30 MINUTES AND COUNTING

- Be dressed and ready to go.
- Turn off overhead lights and dim the lamps.
- Make sure your outdoor lights are on.
- Turn on the music and check music levels in all rooms.
 - *Quick Tip: Be prepared to adjust the volume as people come and go so it's always loud enough to create energy but not too loud for conversation.*
- Light the candles. Don't forget the one in the powder room.
- Uncork the wine.

PARTY TIME

- Do some deep breathing before your guests arrive to get centered and relax.
- Greet your guests at the door for at least the first 30 minutes.
 - *Quick Tip: Offer your guests a drink soon after they enter. People feel more comfortable mingling in a new space when they have a drink in their hand.*
- Have fun and remember, a great host is a relaxed and happy one.

For more party tips, visit The Salonniere at www.thesalonniere.com