

alexandra hedin



weeknight party girl

HOLIDAY TIPS WITH ANNIE FALK

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I love when a friend has such awesome tips for entertaining. Annie Falk hosts some of the swankiest parties around - and she's sharing some tips that you can use too! Read on...

photos courtesy of Annie Falk



1. During the holidays we are all time-starved. If you have your heart set on hosting friends but the idea of a sit-down dinner has you stressed, consider a cocktail party. It is much easier to plan and execute, shorter in duration, and—with a help-yourself bar and stationary hors d'oeuvres buffet—you can maximum time with guests, which is the whole point of the party. In this case, less really is more! 2. Waited too long to get your holiday cards ready? Consider sending out a New Year's greeting instead, or create a digital greeting. Either way, you'll achieve the goal of letting loved ones and cherished friends know you are thinking about them this holiday season. 3. There are always a few last minute invitations to great holiday parties you don't want miss, but who has time to run out for a hostess gift? Buy or make multiples of one hostess gift and keep them on hand. I make and freeze a few pecan pies from Palm Beach Entertaining and a few of my Chocolate Chip Apple Cakes—both freeze well, make great hostess gifts, and they're perfect for pot lucks, too. I also keep several of my favorite soy candles from ThePureCandle on hand: Merry, Cheers, and Peace, which is exactly what I'm seeking this time of ear. It's great to have a supply of cocktail napkins for guests, but sets of the whimsical designs created by August Morgan make terrific hostess gifts!



4. The tree is up but the thought of decorating it seems daunting. One of my friends hosts a tree-trimming party here in Palm Beach and it's one of my favorite gatherings of the season. She designates a color scheme and guests are asked to bring an ornament in the chosen color and dress in accordance with the theme. One year it was ice blue, another silver, and this year was gold. Everyone places their ornament on the tree and it's completely decorated before cocktails are over. As a guest, I love it because I know I've given my friend exactly what she wanted for the holidays. 5. If the imposed calendar of the season doesn't work for you, create your own. My family and I move our Christmas celebration to a day in December that is mutually convenient for everyone and it's the best thing we've ever done. We get our shopping, decorating, and feasting done early and it leaves more time for friends and extended family as the 25th draws near. It is such a treat to have a day of down time, family time, and a celebratory dinner all to ourselves. We started this tradition because we often travel during the holidays and hauling gifts around became more burden than joy.





6. Research shows that experience rather than objects have a strong link to happiness, so why not create some new traditions? Host an ugly sweater party, go ice-skating, organize a cookie swap, or deliver toys in a Santa suit to a local orphanage. For several years my family and I volunteered on Christmas Day. Our most memorable Christmas was spent in Vietnam where we organized a holiday dinner for the staff and residents of an orphanage. We took everyone to a terrific restaurant and presented the children with new coats and computers after the dinner. It is one of the fondest and most joyful Christmas memories we share. 7. If you are hosting several parties, it can be a chore to replenish fresh flowers. Rather than a traditional floral centerpiece on the dining table, create a holiday scene with ornaments, gingerbread houses, or a collection of seasonal trinkets you've gathered from your travels





8. Give your chandelier a holiday update by wrapping the arms in evergreen garland or, if it's in an entryway, hang mistletoe from the center to encourage a little holiday romance. 9. If your dining table is extra-long once you've added the leaves, drape it with a fabric remnant instead of a tablecloth. It is one of my favorite ways to add color, texture, and a special touch to any table.

