

el gusto

Mrs Gusto Popular Q&A's for New Entertainers



Looking for confidence with entertaining?
You're not alone. Here's what Community cooks like
you asked Mrs Gusto, El Gusto's Entertaining Advisor.
Let's see what she has to say.

Inspiration for your next meal.



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Need More Oven Space?

#1 Question

I just had a break yesterday, got another one in 2 weeks but lacking inspiration. Yesterday I had to use every tray in my 2 ovens, meaning I had no spare oven space and was rather stressful as it seemed like so much going on. Next break I want it to use less oven space, be less stressful and simpler. Any ideas?

#1 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber, many thanks for reaching out with your question! I've had a think on how we could make entertaining a little less stressful and a lot more enjoyable, and here's all my ideas.

If you have deep fryers, doing wedges or potatoes in there can free up a lot of oven space – you can serve your wedges with a nice dipping sauce too.

This potato salad is yum – it also has the most positive reviews of all the recipes!

There is also this **Curried Parsnip and Cauliflower Mash** that can be made ahead, frozen, and then heated in the microwave. You could also try doing two cold salads instead of warm – either a typical leafy green or a slaw.

Using the slow cooker to keep soup warm helps to keep the oven and oven top free!

Another great gadget is an air fryer – you can do lots of things in it. I only have one oven, but never run out of space because I always use my slow cooker, air fryer, and InstantPot too! Also, nothing beats the good old fashioned hostess trolley to keep things warm.

Hopefully those ideas give you some food for thought to make your entertaining a whole bunch more relaxed.

Curried Potato Salad with Crispy Prosciutto



Curried Parsnip & Cauliflower Mash



Make Entertaining Easier.

#2 Question

What can you do ahead/earlier in the week, to make entertaining easier?

El Gusto's Freezer Recipe Section

#2 Answer



Hello El Gusto Subscriber, thanks for reaching out with your question!

Here are a few tips & tricks you can try:

Visit [El Gusto's freezer recipe section](#) to find freezer friendly food.

Roast your vegetables prior to the day, freeze them, and reheat them from frozen.



Invest in some fridge friendly platters so that you can have salads, and even break trays if you'd like, prepared prior to the time.

Read through all your recipes prior to the time and have all the dressings, sauces & garnishes made up, everything cut that can be pre-cut, and anything necessary parbaked & preboiled.

Pre-wash & dry anything necessary, like tomatoes, grapes, salad leaves / strawberries, etc.



With meat - if you have a sous vide it is actually possible to sous vide the meat for 1-2 days before, then it can cool and sit refrigerated. All that needs to be done before serving is cover it with your favourite rub and sear the outside until it comes up to temperature.

Have plates & serviettes & a table plan (if applicable) done prior.

Hopefully there's something new in this list for you to try.

#3 Question

Hello Mrs. Gusto.

Can you give me some tips on how to get my dinner when I entertain (which is usually a roast) on the table, still hot and looking presentable. I need some easy garnishing tips especially for the meat platter.

#3 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber, thanks for reaching out with your question.

We have lots of helpful suggestions for you, hopefully some of these will make the difference:

Pulled lamb is an easy option with no carving required, it can be plated up earlier and the mess cleaned up before company arrives. Garnish platter with rosemary (won't wilt under foil like other greens) or mint and pomegranate for colour. Brighten up the platter with vine tomatoes or lemon halves.

A hostess trolley helps get everything to the table hot, if you have one. You can also warm the plates in it if you put them in a hour before your guests arrive.

Another option is a warming tray, you can put your plates and meat platter on it and turn it on a couple of hours before your guests arrive, so they are warm when you are ready to serve.

Oven to table vegetable sides saves lots of hassle, this [Parsnip with Maple Bacon Crumb](#) is a great recipe or this [Red Onion Sweet Potato Tart](#)

If you parboil the potatoes and freeze on the baking trays with oil, all you need to do is pop them in a hot oven when you get home. Or if you have a deep fryer they can be parboiled for 10 minutes, then be dipped into the oil once for 7 minutes and then frozen. Re dip for 10 minutes before serving. If you're short on time, you can skip on the frying before freezing and instead just parboil for 10 minutes, freeze, then deep fry for a little longer.

If you have room in your fridge, do the break/snack tray and gravy on Saturday - cheeses and salami can be cut and kept sealed in fridge Thursday/Friday.

[Try a salad like this](#) or a Layered Salad that can be prepared the day before.

Individual, ready to serve dessert makes things streamlined when you're clearing up from the main course. Any frozen desserts like ice cream cakes - [Crunchy Oat Caramel Ice Cream](#), or [Coffee Choc Ripple Dessert](#), cheesecakes, [Lemon Posset](#), layered biscuit desserts done in ramekins are ideal. Take from the freezer and pop in the fridge after the Supper. Or individual trifles, mousse, tiramisu etc can be made on Friday and stored in the fridge until ready to serve.

All the best with your entertaining.

Parsnip with Maple Bacon Crumb



Red Onion & Sweet Potato Tart



Broccoli & Apple Coleslaw



Coffee Choc Ripple Dessert



Enjoy Your Food While It's Hot

#4 Question

How to stop food from going cold after its been put on the table and waiting for guests to sit up?

#4 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber.

It's always a challenge isn't it, especially if the guests are enjoying themselves.

You could try putting the food on platters that have been heated, if you don't have room in your oven, you can pour boiling water over them just before serving, then once the food is served, keep covered with foil or even a double layer of foil.

Oven to table dishes also stay hotter, but these can be a problem handing round if very hot.

MUD dishes are really good for oven to table, you can get them in most countries now - I love them!

Make sure that your gravy is piping hot as this helps if the food has cooled a bit.

You could also try warming the plates and laying them out just before everyone sits down.

Another suggestion is to get everyone sitting up and then do a round of drinks before you put the food on the table.

One thing that works really well if you have suitable space, is to lay the table with name places as usual but set the food out on a separate table/bar area and everyone comes and helps themselves before finding their places at the table. This way it doesn't matter if the dishes are too hot to pass as no one has to touch them. And you can do one dish of everything instead of trying to do two because the table is too long to pass the food easily! So often the ones at the end miss out on something.

Hope that helps and happy entertaining.



Food Quantity Per Person?

#5 Question

Hello, is there an equation or some way to know how much food to allow per person for a break? I always seem to have lots of potatoes and kumara left over - would love to know how much to allow per person on average.

#5 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber, thanks for reaching out with your question!

It's definitely a tricky one, there's so many variables to allow for, it's not easy to get right!! At least if you have leftovers nobody is going hungry from your house.

I've generally found I allow 2 potato pieces per male and 1 per female if the potatoes are cut bigger. Obviously, you would check your list to see if you have bigger eaters/more children and would also depend if you serve bread rolls, usually children would eat more potatoes if you don't have bread rolls.

If your potatoes are cut really small you would need to allow more.

I would usually allow 1 piece of kumara per person, but if you are serving a lot of other sides for your meal, people might not take both potato and kumara.

*Smashed Curried
Baby Potatoes*

Not sure if that helps at all.



How Much Meat Do I Need?

#6 Question

Hello. Please, is there a simple chart or table with meat portions per person which includes all meat options ie Beef, Lamb, Chicken etc? It would be super handy if this was available on El Gusto. Thanks

#6 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber. this is a tricky one!

We don't have a chart as there isn't really a "one size fits all" answer. There are so many variables including localities, countries, and seasons to name a few!

Quantities also vary considerably depending on the style of the meal, e.g. buffet or plated.

Here is a rough guide I usually work by:

Buffet style meals – plan for $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{3}{4}$ of a pound (227 - 375 g) of meat per person.

Plated meals – plan for 6 – 8 ounces (170 - 227 g) of cooked meat per person

Meats with higher bone to meat ratio – plan for more meat per person as these meats shrink more.

Other factors to consider include meal duration, accompanying sides, dietary restrictions, guests' appetites and also ages of guests/children etc.

A standard serving of meat is around 4 oz (or 120g). However, for entertaining you would be best to allow more, 6 – 12 oz (170 – 350g) of meat per serving (taking all the above into account as well!)

Hope that helps.

Chicken



Beef



Pork



All About Gravy!

#7 Question

How far ahead can I make beef gravy?

Homemade Stock Gravy



#7 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber, thanks for your question!

Personally, I think that gravy is best made on the day, however I know life is busy, and what's best for the gravy isn't always best for our schedules.

Here are some tips and tricks to get organised and have your gravy ready to go the day before without compromising on flavour and quality.

Gluten Free Gravy



To help speed things up a little, I suggest freezing the water that beans, peas, carrots or potatoes have been cooked in during the week - you can then use this in your gravy to help add a little extra flavour. (I find potato water very good as it acts as a thickener for the gravy)

You could also make a red wine jus base beforehand and then add meat juice at the time. Otherwise, if you are cooking meat during the week, freeze the meat juice, and then thaw and make the gravy the day before.

Roast Meat Gravy



Another option if you have a Thermomix, is to thicken it in there with a spoonful of Better Than Bouillon to bring it to the next level - never fails to make delicious gravy!

If preparing in advance, we suggest making it a little thicker and then adding the meat juices at the time to thin it down.

If preparing in advance, you must make sure you bring to boiling point just before serving.

If I have any leftover gravy, I always keep and freeze to use as a tasty base for my next gravy.

Hope you find these points helpful - all the best with your entertaining!

#8 Question

Please can I have some fresh tips...prefer pics of ways to garnish dishes when entertaining. I use herbs alot to garnish and I'd like fresh ways to present them on each dish...and any other ideas too. Obviously alot of the time garnish ends up in the bin after the meal so they potentially should be inexpensive. Thanks in advance.

#8 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber. Thanks for your question. We have a few collections on the website that might give you inspiration:

[Plating Presentation Collection](#)

[Garnish Collection](#)

Happy decorating.



#9 Question

Do you have any tips on how to keep meat warm between carving and serving?

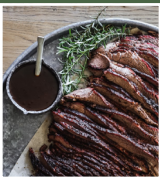
#9 Answer

Thanks for reaching out with your question. I'm sure it's a dilemma faced by many!

Meat needs to rest but not for too long. One way of keeping meat warm is to wrap it in double layer thick foil and a heavy towel or tea towel, and if you have a warming drawer or trolley, you can place it in there to keep warm.

Otherwise, if you can get hold of 'butcher paper' (we get it in our local Campus&Co). that will keep the heat in nicely if you use it to tightly wrap the meat.

Hope this helps.



Meal Preparation

#10 Question

Would love ideas how to prep for meals ahead of time, knowing what can be frozen and what you can do a few days / hours ahead of entertaining! Appreciate you Mrs Gusto!

#10 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber, Thanks for your question, I have lots of great ideas for you.

El Gusto has a "**family friendly section**" - you may like to try some of these recipes.

I usually try to make ahead and freeze breads, tarts, dessert and sometimes potatoes depending on the recipe.

You can roast vegetables prior to the day, freeze, and then reheat from frozen. Serve on platters & add herbs or salad leaves for colour.

Thyme and champagne roasted parsnips - this is one of my favourites with roast pumpkin.

Invest in some fridge friendly platters so you can prepare salads and break trays (crackers, cheese, cucumber etc) the day before. Wrap tightly in film or zip lock bags.

Gravy can be made Saturday and cover well with glad wrap.

Read through all your recipes prior to the time and pre-cut, par bake & preboil, have all the dressings, sauces & garnishes made up possible.

Pre-wash & dry anything necessary a day or two ahead, like tomatoes, grapes, salad leaves / strawberries, etc. Salad ingredients can be prepped in zip lock bags. ready to assemble at the time.

With meat - if you have a sous vide, it is possible to sous vide the meat for 1-2 days before then it can cool and sit refrigerated. All that needs to be done before serving is cover it with your favourite rub and sear the outside until it comes up to temperature.

Sous vide beef cap with apple chimichurri

Have plates & serviettes & a table plan (if applicable) done prior.

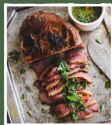
Hope that helps, happy entertaining.

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Thyme and champagne
roasted parsnips



Sous vide beef cap with
apple chimichurri



#11 Question

Love the entertaining menus with the setup tables ideas! We can't do sit up meals for breaks as our table is not big enough. What would be so cool is ideas and examples of how to present a good looking buffet table for a break or evening tea meal.

#11 Answer

Hello El Gusto Subscriber. many thanks for reaching out with your question! We often create a grazing table for our entertaining and I always add a brown paper runner down my kitchen island to make for easy clean up!

First of all, I recommend foraging something for the table centrepiece – I love olive tree branches for this, but in winter months we've been using apple tree branches.

Next, plan out all your serving dishes before – make sure you've got varying heights rather than all flat plates.

Linen or other material offcuts under or on serving plates also helps to add some interest. You could pop your bread on a nice piece of material etc.

Finally, pop some wine and glasses at the end of the table too.

For your interest, here are some examples that we already have on the site:

Rustic Lunch Snacking Board

Layered Grazing Table

Grazing Table For Twelve

Rustic Lunch Snacking Board

Layered Grazing Table

Grazing Table For Twelve



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a hand...

