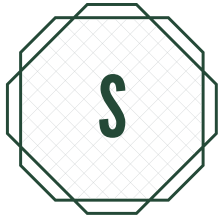




— SECOND TABLE —

LEADER HANDBOOK



— **SECOND TABLE** —
Pulpit Rock

LEADER HANDBOOK

SECOND TABLE

INTRODUCTION

Second Table – Host Guide

THE TABLES

Welcome Table

Community Table

Gospel Table

Identity Table

Neighbor Table

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Sustain Table

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HOST GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Thank you so much for hosting a Second Table group and making yourself available to foster community. Rest assured, you don't need a big house, gourmet cooking skills or a ton of Bible knowledge to host a Table. You just need a table, a family room, or a semi-quiet place and this Host Guide – these are the essentials.

As you may know, we spend a lot of time talking about The Table at Pulpit Rock. Jesus spent many hours around the table sharing and eating with people and it is around tables that we share the story, discover our identity, and meet with God and others. This environment of hospitality around the Table remains the best way to get people together and invite God into the conversation. That's why we are going to gather for a series of meals, times of discussion, and a chance to form relationship with others on the journey. We've put together readings that focus on some key aspects of an ever growing relationship with Christ, and included some intentional and applicable discussion starters to go along with each; not lofty questions answered with 'church answers' but instead questions for finding Jesus at work in our very own lives.

Eating a meal together naturally invites some intimacy and vulnerability. We believe that as we question and wrestle, listen and share, community will be formed. These gatherings are a safe place that may sometimes be messy, laughter or tear soaked, but will always be a place of grace and a celebration of the love of Jesus.

HOST GUIDE

SPECIFIC TABLE INSTRUCTIONS

There are a total of 8 Tables:

- Welcome
- Community
- Gospel
- Identity
- Neighbor
- Listen
- Sustain
- Partner

These meals are a time for discussion and community, and should be facilitated more as a conversation among friends and less as a Bible study or typical small group.

MEAL COMPONENTS

Each of the components can be paired with the actual meal course it represents, however it does not have to be. Having some food and drink, however, can make this time more meaningful.

Opening Toast – instead of the traditional prayer before a meal, here you or anyone from your table that volunteers, will read the provided opening toast. The toast creates warm feelings and promotes a sense of togetherness to set the tone for the meal.

(1-2 minutes)

HOST GUIDE

Appetizer – this is a short reading on that evening's table topic, and should be emailed out to the group prior to the meal. After the opening toast, the appetizer should be read aloud. (3-5 minutes)

Main Course – this is the discussion portion of the evening. Please read the questions and allow for answers, stories and discussion to take place around the table. (45 minutes)

Dessert – this is a next step or challenge for the week ahead based on the night's topic. Please read the dessert thought. It can also be given, emailed or texted out for further reminder during the week. The previous week's dessert step can also be discussed. (15 minutes)

Closing Toast - You or anyone from your table that volunteers, will offer a closing toast or blessing to wrap up the evening. (1-2 minutes)

HOSTING TIPS

As a host, let your goal be to create a place for people to experience warmth and great conversations and that they would leave feeling seen and invited to return. Please see the Hosting Tips & Ideas Appendix for more help!

HOST GUIDE

WHAT'S NEXT?

These Tables are designed to take place a total of 8 times. These meetings can happen on consecutive weeks or you may decide to space them out over a number of months. The discussions were specially crafted to be relevant time and time again, at any point along the journey, so this series could become a regular part of the rhythm of your group.

Your group may even find that discussions around the table are a great place to invite new friends, co-workers, neighbors and strangers!

We are here for support and to help your Second Tables to be a success. Please don't hesitate to contact me!

Caitlin Garrett

Groups Director

cgarrett@pulpitrock.com



WELCOME TABLE

WELCOME TABLE

OPENING TOAST

May these tables be a place of warmth and great conversation.
Allow us to leave here with souls full from sharing a meal
with Jesus and each other.

APPETIZER

As you may know, we spend a lot of time talking about The Table at Pulpit Rock. Jesus spent many hours around the table sharing and eating with people and it is around tables that we share the story, discover our identity, and meet with God and others. That's why we are going to gather together for a series of meals, times of discussion, and a chance to form relationship with others on the journey.

Tonight is an introduction to this time around the table. For the next two weeks, we will get together here and enjoy a meal, conversation and community. At the end of these weeks, you will have the opportunity to continue the Table experience with those you've met here or find out more about ways to join in community at Pulpit Rock.

Each week we'll read together a short passage that focuses on some key aspects of a relationship with Christ, and then we'll discuss our thoughts on some questions that go along with that topic. These won't be typical questions answered with 'church answers' but instead questions for

WELCOME TABLE

finding Jesus at work in our very own lives. This may feel awkward or uncomfortable at first, but seeking to see him there is always worth it.

Eating a meal together naturally invites some intimacy and vulnerability. We believe that as we question and wrestle, listen and share, community will be formed. You are invited to relax at this table. Allow yourself to be a bit unguarded and expect Jesus to show up for dinner. These gatherings are a safe place that may sometimes be messy, laughter or tear soaked, but will always be a place of grace and a celebration of the love of Jesus.

MAIN COURSE

- Introduce yourself to one another – who are you? Where are you from? What do you do for work and for fun?
- Take a minute to reflect on all of the tables you have sat at. Share a memorable meal you have had.
- Why was that time so special? The food, the atmosphere, the conversation that was shared?
- How are you hoping God will show up for you in these meals?

DESSERT

Every week, at the end of the time together, we'll be left with a thought or next step for the week ahead. This week, take a minute to ask God to help you see his presence at the table over the next several weeks. Ask him to reveal himself in the discussions and help you be open to making new relationships here.

WELCOME TABLE

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



COMMUNITY

COMMUNITY

OPENING TOAST

May God convince of our need for each other,
May He instruct us how to love one another,
And may He give us the miracle of lasting friendship!

APPETIZER

There is an assumption throughout all of scripture that is vital for us to realize. Relationships are REALLY important. We were created for Community. And from the beginning, that community was intended to be found with each other, not just with God. There are a lot of places to see this, but one of my favorites is from Philipians chapter 1:3-5,7-9. Listen to how Paul talks about his friends:

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer: that your love may abound

COMMUNITY

more and more in knowledge and depth of insight...

Loving relationships are both the means and the end of our spiritual life. And you see in this passage that they fuel Paul's ministry, and they are his deepest prayer for his friends.

We all know this on some level. We know deep inside how important community is. But we get distracted, we get hurt, we get bitter, and often we give up on the dream of closely connected community.

God never gives up on that dream for us. In fact when Jesus prays for us, His prayer is that we would experience oneness with each other, in the same way He experiences it with God.

Sometimes we approach our spiritual life like it is a bar. Sitting at the bar, you may be in close proximity with others, but you are really just facing the bartender. Similarly in our spiritual lives, we can have a "just me and Jesus" mentality. But God doesn't invite us to a bar, He invites us to a table. And at the table we need each other, we face each other, we listen and we interact. At the table, God is in our midst, knitting us together in community.

It can be a challenging process. But the process begins by acknowledging the fact that we need each other. We are better together. And we need God to connect us in community.

Choose the table!

COMMUNITY

MAIN COURSE

- What makes you feel seen and loved in friendship?
- How is God using someone in your life these days?
- What does 'choosing the table' look like for you at this point in your life?

DESSERT

As you are going, take a second, and reach out to someone here. Extend yourself. Initiate further connection. Listen, laugh, eat together and enjoy community.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



GOSPEL

GOSPEL

OPENING TOAST

‘Because of his great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ’. May we cling tightly to the love of God
And may we believe that in Christ we are accepted,
there is nothing left to earn

APPETIZER

‘Standing with God, my sin in front of us, working on it together. What if we could believe this is how God sees it, how it really is? What if Christ, for the believer, is never over there, on the other side of our sin? What if the power of His death on the cross allows Him to stand right in front of me, on my worst day and smile bigger and happier than any human being ever could? Before, God was always “over there,” on the other side of my sin, obscured by the mound of trash between us. But now I realize He’s here, with me.

He puts His hands on my shoulders, staring into my eyes. No disappointment. No condemnation. Only delight. Only love. He pulls me into a bear hug, so tight it knocks the breath out of me for a moment. At first, I feel unworthy. I want to push away and cry out, “I don’t deserve this. Please stop. I’m not who you think I am!” But He does know. And soon I give in to His embrace. I hear Him say, “I know. I know. I’ve known from before time began. I’ve seen it all. I’m right here. I’ve got you.”

GOSPEL

And now I'm holding on with all my might. He stays right there in the moment, until He's certain His love has been completely communicated and received. Only then does He release His grip, so He can turn to put an arm around my shoulder.

He then directs my sight to that mound of filth now out in front of us. Gazing at that mound of pain, I consider that I never thought I'd experience this kind of moment. All of the pain, regret and damage of my life is laid out in front of me. All that has caused shame and condemnation. All that has caused me to pretend and impress and yearn for control. All that has broken my heart and His. But now I'm viewing it with Jesus' arm around me! He's been holding me with utter delight, all with my sin right here in our midst, never allowing it between us. He wants to know me in the midst of this, not when I get it cleaned up. I know now if this mound is to ever shrink, it'll be by trusting this moment for the rest of my life.' (taken from [The Cure](#) by John S. Lynch, Bruce McNicol, Bill Thrall)

THIS is what the Gospel teaches, God has seen all of your sins and He's canceled the debt. Because of Jesus, your sin is no longer an issue with God. We no longer need to pretend to be perfect so we are loved and valued. Ephesians 2 says it beautifully, 'In Christ, I am accepted...' If we allow ourselves to believe it, it will reshape and remake every part of who we are.

GOSPEL

MAIN COURSE

How do you typically see God's posture?

What does allowing yourself to be loved by God look like to you?

How is Jesus Good News in your life right now?

DESSERT

Take some time this week to sit with this image of Jesus. Write out some ways that truly believing this Good News could reshape what you believe about yourself, others, and God.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



IDENTITY

IDENTITY

OPENING TOAST

May we believe the voice of Truth in our lives,
and continually remind ourselves and others that what God says
about us is the truest thing

APPETIZER

If someone were to ask, “Who are you?” what would you say? Perhaps you would answer that question by simply giving your name or by recalling the primary role you play in your family, “I am a mom” or “I am a husband”. Or maybe you would answer by stating your profession, “I am a police officer” or “I am a teacher”.

Sadly, we sometimes identify ourselves with the greatest hurdles we have to overcome in our lives. Maybe you would respond to that question with “I am an addict” or “I am a homosexual”. No matter who you are, that question probably rarely initially sparks the deepest and truest answer.

There are so many voices in our lives telling us who we are, the markedly loudest voice being our own.

- Think about it, how often are you telling yourself positive things about you?
 - How often are you telling yourself negative things about you?
-
-

IDENTITY

- And how often do we let what others say about us ring true in our hearts and minds?

It can be difficult to detach our true identity from the identity we have been given by others or have maybe even given ourselves. What would happen if we turned the tables on these voices and believed that what GOD says about us *is the truest thing about who we are*? Well, we would find ourselves giving a completely different answer when asked that same question. Perhaps we would start to see that all the bruised and broken parts of us matter a little bit less. We could begin to believe that our entire identity is based on the fact that we are His beloved in whom He is well pleased.

Therefore, you are now:

A child of God

“Yet to all who did receive him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.” John 1:12

A friend of Jesus

“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you.” John 15:15

Not who you used to be

“For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.” Romans 6:6

IDENTITY

Accepted by Christ

“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God.” Romans 15:7

Created for great purpose

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.” Ephesians 2:10

MAIN COURSE

- What do you most easily find your identity in?
- Who is the loudest voice you find yourself listening to these days?
- What truth about your identity do you most need to believe right now?

DESSERT

Sift through all the destructive voices that you listen to in your life. Pick out the most destructive voice and note how many times you hear it “speaking up” this week. Choose a scripture verse of truth to combat that voice with.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



NEIGHBOR

NEIGHBOR

OPENING TOAST

May we work towards the shalom of our city,
And in its flourishing may we experience the flourishing
That our own hearts so desperately long for.

APPETIZER

There is a fascinating passage in the Old Testament book of Jeremiah where the prophet Jeremiah speaks on behalf of God to his people. They were about to be sent into exile and taken captive by the Babylonians. This is what He says:

“Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the Lord on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare. - Jeremiah 29:4-7

The word welfare is translated in many different ways. Some have it as the peace and prosperity, some even have it translated as the well-being

NEIGHBOR

or good of the city. The original word is shalom - “universal flourishing, wholeness and delight.” Put simply shalom is “Life as God intended it to be.” God is telling His people that He wants them to be rooted. To literally dig into the earth and plant seeds, take wives and have kids, to multiply and grow. He ties their peace, their flourishing with the flourishing of this wicked pagan city. It’s an incredible window into the heart of God.

This view into God’s heart is no more clear than what He says in Matthew:

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. Matthew 22:37-39

The great commandment. What makes it great is not just that Jesus says it matters most. What makes it great is that it is so simple, yet so powerful when we actually do it.

God desires to see the flourishing not just of ourselves, but the places and unique contexts we find ourselves in. The overflow of the growth and good that God is doing in you, must also be present in the PLACE God has you. We can literally apply ‘love my neighbor’ to the places we belong and we begin to carry responsibility for its flourishing as well. It might be your neighborhood, your gym, your workplace, your kid’s school, your carpool... you are not where you are by accident. It’s not a mistake or random coincidence. And God’s plan for the flourishing of those places involves you!

NEIGHBOR

MAIN COURSE

- Where are some places in your neighborhood that could benefit from you ‘seeking the welfare of the city where I have sent you’?
- Who is a neighbor you could love? What are some of the ways to intentionally show it?
- What are some obstacles holding you back in building relationships in the places God has you?

DESSERT

What is a next step you can take with one of your neighbors? Can you learn a name and begin to pray? Invite a coworker to lunch? Invite a family from your kid’s school over for a football game? Invite God to lead you to take a step this week that stretches you.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



LISTEN

LISTEN

OPENING TOAST

Jesus said “my sheep hear my voice.” May each of us hear the voice of God in our lives, And may we have the trust and the courage to respond to what we hear.

APPETIZER

There is a fascinating, but dated, metaphor in the New Testament that compares Jesus to a shepherd and all of us to His sheep. And while most of us don't raise sheep these days, we can still relate to the language in John 10:2-4. Jesus says:

The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep listen to his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice.

It is a simple picture of sheep who know and trust their shepherd. They listen to Him and respond to His voice. It's a powerful metaphor that clarifies for us that one of the most important things we do in our journey with God is:

Listen to His voice and respond to it.

LISTEN

In some ways, the only task on the journey with God is listening to His voice and responding to it. If we all could do that, our spiritual lives, our families, our ministry and our world would flourish.

And while we all would probably acknowledge how important that is, realizing it is important doesn't necessarily make it easy to do. For most of us there are dozens of things about which we would love to hear the voice of God. Yet often we are left wondering what God is saying to us.

God can speak through His word. He can speak directly to our spirit. He can speak through nature and through our circumstances. We have to give Him opportunity and space to speak, allowing our hearts and minds to soak in the words of truth. But so often the things He says are best confirmed and clarified around a table. When we sit at a table with other people who are listening to God, our ability to listen to God is multiplied.

Each of us needs to hear from God. And each of us needs to talk about what we are hearing (or what we are not hearing). That process is one of the essential rhythms of the journey with God.

As you sit at the table today, risk. Share what you are hearing. Invite God to speak through the voice of the others at the table. And listen for the voice of your savior.

LISTEN

MAIN COURSE

What is something you hear God saying to you at this point in your life?

What are you learning about yourself these days? How are you learning that?

Is there anything about which you would like to hear from God?

DESSERT

Take a second, and schedule a time in the next 2 weeks when you can get some uninterrupted space to listen to God. Put it in your calendar. Take a Bible, a pen and a notebook, and invite your Heavenly Father to speak.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



SUSTAIN

SUSTAIN

OPENING TOAST

May we allow God to be our sustainer,
May we take Him up on the invitation to stop and rest in Him
So we may be empowered to live with and for Him.

APPETIZER

We produce who we are! That is a sobering statement. We are often tired, worn out and running on empty, spiritually. We find it difficult to sustain, to endure; the effort of every-day living often feels like a burden of a ton of bricks. Humans don't drift toward simplicity and calm, so realizing the emptiness and complexity in our life is a good thing; it can help motivate us towards discovering what we need to feel fulfilled and to sustain, to recover our life.

Jesus reminds us to get away with Him; to set aside the distractions and engage with Him. Engaging with God is an opportunity to talk with Him in prayer, an opportunity to listen for His response. We are usually quick to "do" the talking, but not so good at listening for His voice. It requires intentionality, being still and practice.

We are invited to rest in Him; to enjoy the calm that comes with letting Him carry whatever it is that is causing us to be anxious, worried, or afraid. Nothing is too big or too small to give over to God. If it causes us

SUSTAIN

distress, He wants to help us; He wants to carry our burdens. He has not asked us to complete a to do list, but instead He invites us to loiter with Him, taking time and space to reflect on the good gifts He's given us and how we feel when we are full in our souls.

He wants us to watch Him; to look for Him in our circumstances; to see His character in the lives of the people we come in contact with, and see His beauty and creativity in the world around us. He does not hide from us, He is right in front in us, but we can stay too busy, or too distracted to notice. He calls us to intentionally stop our hurry and find Him in the calm.

If we are willing to learn to live our life through Him, we will learn the unforced rhythms of grace. He invites us to keep company with him, to abide with him and in him, learning to live freely and lightly.

Jesus shares a parable in John 15, indicating the importance of abiding with:

“Yes, I am the vine; you are the branches. Those who abide in me, and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from Me you can do nothing.

To abide with Christ, means we learn to rest in Him, to trust Him, to depend on Him. When we linger with Him, we begin to live with great intentionality, allowing our identity in Christ to determine and influence our decisions. We look to Him to empower us to live our life with Him and

SUSTAIN

for Him. These healthy ways of following Christ, will help us feel released from the burden of “the doing” and will help us embrace what it means, “to be.”

MAIN COURSE

- What are some of the burdens from your everyday life that are overwhelming right now?
- How are you finding rest these days?
- What are a few ways you can be more intentional in finding time to be with Him?

DESSERT

Take some time in the next few days to “un-plug” and “be still” and listen, intentionally asking God to speak into our life.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.



PARTNER

PARTNER

OPENING TOAST

May the cities we live in, The jobs we work at,
And the neighborhoods we play in
Become settings to partner with God in service and love.

APPETIZER

As Christ-followers we are called to take part in this faith journey. Our own, yes! But also to serve and walk alongside others in theirs. Jesus was and is the ultimate inviter and He has invited us to partner with Him as He works. To move away from the sidelines...to be active, involved, and intentional as we join in God's work.

We find our life as we give it away...

Whoever finds their life will lose it. Whoever loses their life because of me will find it. Matthew 10:39

Where is God at work and how do I join Him is the central question here. But joining in God's work could be as simple as just showing up. Every time we extend a hand to help or speak a word of kindness or give money for a worthy cause, we are "working" with Him.

The most important thing you bring to a partnership is yourself. If we

PARTNER

will commit to show up, we know God will show up. He is so faithful to use us. And as we are openhanded and openhearted with giving away the gospel, giving our time, giving our resources, and the giving of ourselves... we begin to truly see that we were made in the image of greatness and for the purpose of greatness. And all greatness has something to do with serving... *“For God so loved the world, he GAVE...”*

We have opportunities every day to help work for the flourishing of those around us. Through where we work, live, and play, God is exposing each of us to a need right now. And He wants to use **our** brokenness, **our** poverty, **our** messiness to be a part of the process where the only solution can be found in Him. He allows us to join Him in this equation! And as we partner with God and with others we are reminded that we are citizens of heaven, colonizing this world so that the kingdom is coming on earth as it is in heaven.

“When we believe the Good News that the world is a different place because of Jesus, we find our own lives transformed by that belief, and are recruited to be part of the continuing image-bearing work. We become transformed people, who transform the world. ...healed people through whom God brings healing to the world ...put right with God people, so we can be putting-right people for the world.”

N.T. Wright

PARTNER

MAIN COURSE

- In this current season of life, where do you see God already working around you?
- How are you joining God in his work these days or how could you begin to partner with him?
- Where would you like God to stretch you the most in how you join him at work this year?

DESSERT

This week, identify an opportunity to join in with God's work where you work, live, or play. Pray for vision and bravery as you step out in this partnership.

CLOSING TOAST

Invite someone to share a toast or blessing to close the evening.

TIPS AND TRICKS

APPENDIX A

TIPS AND TRICKS

HOSTING

As the Host of a Second Table, your overarching goal for this time is to create an environment where people can experience warmth and great conversations so that they would leave feeling seen and invited to return. Some easy ways to do this:

- **COMMUNICATE** clearly and often about when and where your group will be doing Table. Send out the appetizer reading in advance so folks have time to process.
- Make your space **WELCOMING**, be it around your table, in your family room, or the corner of a quiet coffee shop. There may be space available at Pulpit Rock for you to host on some weeknights.
- If you plan to serve **FOOD & DRINKS**, have something available as people come in. Make sure to find out allergies and dietary concerns from your guests, and be as accommodating as possible. See Appendix B for some simple recipes.
- Some **SOFT MUSIC** playing creates a comfortable environment and takes away some discomfort during pauses in conversation.
- **BALANCE** the discussion. As the host, you don't have to 'lead'. Allow others to get involved in the readings and the toasts. Don't be afraid of silence – sit in the awkwardness a little to allow people to process and share introspectively. However, it is also great to model vulnerability and the willingness to share authentically.
- **EXPECT** Jesus to show up!

TIPS AND TRICKS

IDEAS

Second Table is intentionally designed to be easily adaptable for many contexts. Although there are named parts for several courses of a meal, you don't have to do each one – or not have any food at all! You could have a potluck, a themed dinner, or even just share the discussion over coffee or a beer.

- **8 WEEK SERIES** – take 8 straight weeks to experience the Tables. This can be especially helpful for groups just starting out or when you need to reset the rhythm of meeting consistently.
- **INTERMITTENT TABLES** – the Tables don't have to be used consecutively. Do one once a month and make it a special meal celebration to look forward to all year.
- **FAMILY TABLES** – invite the groups' kids to the Table and allow their voices into the discussion. Or do the whole series just as a family.
- **MISSIONAL TABLES** – put together a dinner group of folks from your neighborhood or your workplace for a Table experience. You can do the whole series or just one. We believe everyone is on spiritual journey, they might just not quite know it yet. These questions can help anyone see where God is already at work in their lives.

As you practice the Table, please let us know what amazing ideas you come up with!

RECIPES

APPENDIX B

RECIPES

Here are a few simple and delicious recipes to get the ball rolling. Make sure to find out the allergies and dietary restrictions of your guests and provide a little bit of an introduction to everything you serve to make sure there are no surprises!

APPETIZERS

You can definitely do chips and salsa, fruit and cheese, or even a veggie tray from the store, but here are some other appetizer ideas to up your entertaining game.

BREAD DIPPING OIL PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES

Ingredients

- 1 TBS cracked black pepper
- 1 TBS dried parsley
- 1 TBS dried oregano
- 1 TBS dried basil
- ½ TBS crushed red pepper
- 3 tsp minced garlic, jarred or fresh
- 1 ½ tsp sea salt
- 1 ½ tsp onion powder
- ½ tsp garlic powder
- ½ tsp dried rosemary
- Extra virgin olive oil, to taste

Combine all ingredients through rosemary. Drizzle with desired amount of olive oil just before serving. Serve with your favorite Italian bread.

RECIPES

PEPPERONI CUPS PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES MAKES 12

Ingredients

12 slices deli pepperoni (not prepackaged)

½ cup ricotta cheese

1 egg yolk

1 TBS grated parmesan cheese

1 tsp Italian seasoning

1/3 cup shredded mozzarella cheese

Press one slice of pepperoni into each opening of a mini muffin tin. Mix ricotta through Italian seasoning and spoon 1 TBS of the mixture into each pepperoni cup; top each with a pinch of mozzarella. Bake at 375 for 10 minutes. Cool slightly and serve.

LEMON FETA DIP PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES MAKES: 2 CUPS

Ingredients

14 oz feta cheese (about 2 cups, crumbled)

2 TBS lemon zest

2-4 TBS fresh lemon juice

1 TBS minced garlic, jarred or fresh

12 TBS extra virgin olive oil, plus more for drizzling

Crushed red pepper flakes, to taste

Put feta, lemon zest, garlic, oil and 2 TBS lemon juice in a blender. Blend until combined but still a bit chunky. Add more lemon juice if too salty. Serve in a bowl, drizzled with olive oil and crushed red pepper. Serve alongside veggies, pitas chips or crackers.

RECIPES

MAIN DISHES

Here a few quick and relatively simple main dish ideas. The goal is to spend time at the table and not have to be running back and forth to the kitchen every few minutes to check on a fussy dish.

EASIEST TACO SOUP PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES SERVES: 4

Ingredients

- 1 can green enchilada sauce
- 1 envelope taco seasoning
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can chicken broth
- 1 can pinto beans
- 1 can black beans
- 1 can diced fire roasted tomatoes
- 1 lb chicken breast shredded or 1 can chicken breast

In a dutch oven or stock pot over medium high heat, whisk together enchilada sauce and the taco seasoning. Add all other ingredients and stir to combine. Heat until warmed through. Can be served with chips, sour cream, guacamole, cheese, etc.

CROCKPOT BEEF SANDWICHES

PREP TIME: 5 MINUTES (COOK TIME: 4+ HOUR) SERVES: 5

Adapted from The Pioneer Woman

RECIPES

Ingredients

- 1 2lb chuck roast
- 1 can beef broth
- 1 TBS Italian seasoning
- 1/2 salt
- 1/4 cup water
- 1/2 jar of pepperoncini peppers with juice
- Deli rolls or buns
- Cheese slices, optional

Combine all ingredients in a crockpot, stir to combine seasoning with liquid. Cook on high for 3-4 hours. Meat should shred easily with two forks; keep cooking until it does. Serve meat on buns with optional cheese.

PASTA CARBONARA PREP TIME: 30 MINUTES SERVES: 4

From Martha Stewart

Ingredients

- 1 lb pasta, such as spaghetti or fettuccine
- 8 slices cooked bacon, chopped
- 3 eggs
- 3/4 cup grated or shredded parmesan cheese
- 1/2 cup half and half
- Plenty of fresh cracked pepper, to taste

Set a large pot of water to boil (for pasta). Salt boiling water generously; add pasta and cook until al dente, according to package instructions. While pasta cooks, in a large bowl, whisk together eggs, Parmesan, and

RECIPES

half-and-half. Set aside. Drain pasta, leaving some water clinging to it. Working quickly, add hot pasta to egg mixture. Add bacon; season with salt and pepper, and toss all to combine (heat from pasta will cook eggs). Serve immediately, sprinkled with additional Parmesan cheese.

GREEK SALAD

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES (30 MINUTES MARINATE) SERVES: 6

From Ina Garten

Ingredients

- 1 English cucumber, seeded & sliced ¼ inch thick
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 1 yellow bell pepper, diced
- 1 pint grape tomatoes
- ½ red onion, sliced in half rounds
- ½ lb feta cheese, diced not crumbled
- ½ cup Kalamata olives, pitted

Vinaigrette

- | | |
|---------------------|--------------------|
| 1 TBS minced garlic | 1 tsp kosher salt |
| 1 tsp dried oregano | ½ tsp black pepper |
| ½ tsp Dijon mustard | ½ cup olive oil |
| ¼ red wine vinegar | |

Place the cucumber, peppers, tomatoes and red onion in a large bowl. For the vinaigrette, whisk together the garlic, oregano, mustard, vinegar, salt and pepper in a small bowl. Still whisking, slowly add the olive oil to make an emulsion.

RECIPES

Pour the vinaigrette over the vegetables.

Add the feta and olives and toss lightly.

Set aside for 30 minutes to allow the flavors to blend.

Serve at room temperature.

DESSERTS

You can never go wrong with a delicious dessert, whether you buy it from the store or home bake it, dessert makes for the perfect end to the evening.

BERRY CHEESECAKE TRIFLE

PREP TIME: 25 MINUTES (CHILL: 30 MINUTES) SERVES: 8

Ingredients

1 store bought angel food cake

2 boxes strawberries

2 pints blueberries

2 boxes cheesecake flavor pudding mix

4 cups milk

1 tub whipped topping

Whisk or beat milk and pudding mixes for 2 minutes; set aside. Hull and slice strawberries. Cut or tear angel food cake into pieces. Layer (preferably in a clear, glass bowl) cake, pudding, berries, whipped topping. Repeat until all ingredients are gone. Chill until serving.

RECIPES

STRAWBERRY OATMEAL BARS

PREP TIME: 20 MINUTES (COOK TIME: 35 MINUTES) MAKES: 16 BARS

Adapted from Well Plated

Ingredients

1 cup old fashioned oats

¾ cup flour

1/3 cup brown sugar

¼ tsp salt

6 TBS unsalted butter, melted (or substitute coconut oil)

2 cups strawberries, diced

1 tsp cornstarch

1 TBS lemon juice

1 TBS sugar

In a medium bowl, combine the oats, flour, brown sugar, ginger, and salt. Pour in the melted butter and stir until it forms clumps and the dry ingredients are evenly moistened. Set aside 1/2 cup of the crumble mixture, then press the rest into an even layer in the bottom of the prepared pan. Scatter half of the strawberries over the crust. Sprinkle the cornstarch evenly over the top, then sprinkle on the lemon juice and 1/2 tablespoon of the granulated sugar. Scatter on the remaining berries, then the remaining 1/2 tablespoon sugar. Sprinkle the reserved crumbs evenly over the top. You will have some fruit showing through.

Bake the bars at 375 in a greased 8x8 pan for 35 to 40 minutes, until the fruit is bubbly and the crumb topping smells toasty and looks golden. Place the pan on a wire rack to cool completely

RECIPES

CHOCOLATE CHIP PIE

PREP TIME: 15 MINUTES (COOK TIME 55 MINUTES) SERVES: 8

Ingredients

19" unbaked, thawed pie shell

2 eggs

1/2 cup flour

1/2 cup brown sugar

1/2 cup sugar

3/4 cup butter, softened

1 cup of semi-sweet chocolate chips

1 cup chopped nuts

Preheat oven to 325 degrees F.

Beat eggs in large mixer bowl on high speed until foamy and pale in color.

Beat in flour, granulated sugar, and brown sugar. Beat in butter until combined.

Stir in chips and nuts. Spoon into pie shell. The mixture will be thick.

Bake for 55 to 60 minutes or until knife inserted halfway between edge and center comes out clean. Cool on wire rack. Serve warm with ice cream or whipped cream.



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