



HOLIDAY ENTERTAINING TIPS BY CHEF DINO RENAERTS

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Holiday Entertaining in the year of COVID

By Chef & Sommelier, Dino Renaerts

What a year 2020 has turned out to be! No one has been spared topsy-turvyness in their lives and we are now all being called upon to reduce our circles. That is somewhat antithetical to what the holiday season is for most us but depending on where you are, you may still have the opportunity to host family and friends to celebrate the joy of the season. Below are a few signature tips on how to entertain for an intimate evening or a larger gathering that we will eventually be able to host again.



Chef Dino Renaerts and Sommelier Mark Davidson.

1. MUSIC

I am a firm believer that music sets the tone and there must be background music at any event. We have catered many corporate mix-n-mingle functions over the years where the client doesn't want any music playing or doesn't bother. When the room is packed it may not be needed but that crucial time when people are arriving, it sets the vibe and shows your guests that it's time to be social. Turning it off at the end is also your signal that it's time to go home.

The same ethos applies to your home entertaining. My wife is well known amongst our friends for being the Queen of the playlist. She takes the time to curate music for every party we host, whether a year-end school party, a 50th birthday celebration, or our annual Christmas bash. She takes into account the personalities coming to the party, their age and taste, and seems to always find the right balance that is entertaining, often resulting in guests singing along in the end. So this year you can tick this off your to-do list and listen to her Christmas Party Mix [here](#).

2. RENTALS? YES!!



Bringing in rentals is a great way to make your life easier. Rentals allow you to be creative with linens, china, and even cutlery. You can create a whole look that you may not have ever bought for your own home normally, like ghost or gold chiavari chairs. For our Christmas bash, we even rent a red carpet that extends down our very steep driveway. It's always a conversation piece but it's more for practical reasons: it provides a safer path down our rather slick driveway.

Other items to consider are coat racks and hangers that level up the old coats-thrown-all-over-the-bed scenario. Patio heaters and pop-up tents extend the outdoor season and can be used as a smoking lounge as well. At the end of the night, being able to put the dirty wine glasses into a rack is a hell of a time saver and a relief after the effort you put into the evening.

3. DRINKS



The first time I went to my wife's apartment when we were dating, I opened the refrigerator and other than a few condiments, she had nothing but bottles of champagne on every shelf. That pretty much sealed the deal for me. (I should probably mention that she is also a Sommelier). Bubbles have been a staple in our house since we moved in together. It's not all champagne by any means but we have a penchant for [Crémant de Bourgogne, Brut or Rosé, for the quality in comparison to price. We love Bella and Fitz bubbles from the Okanagan, and we are nostalgic for anything Schramsberg from our many years of seeing them in Napa Valley.](#)

[4. CASUAL FOOD](#)



[Food has been bringing people together since the advent of cooking over fire and I just can't have people in my home without sharing food. This time of year we keep various cured meats, cheese, accompaniments, bread, and crackers in the house at all times for when you need an impromptu spread to entertain. We buy all our charcuterie from Oyama Sausage Co. on Granville Island and through our business we order cheese from the small purveyors on Vancouver Island, augmented with aged manchego, pecorino, and mimolette from Les Amis du Fromage. Get yourself a quality wooden board like this one from The Cross and I promise every time you create a spread your display skills will grow. Make sure to pick flavours that play off each other like a creamy triple cream brie with sharp gherkins; salty manchego with a drizzle of dark honey; tangy goat cheese with sweet and spice red pepper jelly. You can also order all your goodies through our Provisions site and have them delivered to your door if you're in Vancouver.](#)

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[Chef Dino Renaerts is the Executive Chef & Partner at Bon Vivant Catering and Bon Vivant Hospitality Group based in West Vancouver, B.C. Chef Dino's career spanning almost three decades that has seen him cook in some of the city's finest restaurants and is considered one of the leaders on the west coast culinary scene. Bon Vivant specializes in everything from weddings to cocktail and corporate events. Be sure to contact them for your next event!](#)

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