

UPGRADE

# Be thankful! Your Friendsgiving hosts are spending big bucks to give you the perfect holiday potluck.

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Friendsgiving is all grown up. (PeopleImages/iStock)



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Friendsgiving hosts tell Moneyish that getting pals to kick in cash or casseroles – or crowdsourcing your menu on Google Docs – trims stress and expenses.

Food

Friendsgiving

Thanksgiving

The Thanksgiving alternative, where friends who couldn't (or wouldn't) be with their families for the holiday cobble together a turkey dinner themselves, has evolved from a low-key potluck to a full-blown holiday tradition as big as the Macy's Parade balloons.



As fancy as Friendsgiving is getting, it only needs to be as expensive as you make it. So several hosts dished their tried-and-tested tips to trimming expenses (and stress) while planning the perfect potluck.

**Mix up homemade with store-bought.** Chef Julie Hartigan, owner of culinary consulting company [Cooking w/ Julie](#) who throws a Friendsgiving every year, told Moneyish you can mix and match. “There’s no rule that every single item has to be made by you ... and with some re-plating and easy garnishes to gussy things up, you’ll have a gorgeous spread,” she said.



Consider making your Friendsgiving a more budget-friendly brunch. (SolStock/iStock)

**Consider a Friendsgiving brunch.** “People’s schedules are often packed with nighttime festivities, and brunch is a lower-cost meal to prepare,” said Chef Hartigan. “I rely on comforting casseroles done in my slow cooker such as ‘Egg & Tortilla Bake’ and a fruit salad. And instead of buying expensive French Champagne for mimosas, stick with lower-cost but just as delicious prosecco from Italy, or cava from Spain.”

**Use paper plates and plasticware.** The last thing you want to tackle after cooking all day is washing dishes. “Besides, no one has sets of dishes that can feed 12 or 20 people,” said Nelson. “I use the heavy disposable plates, and the plastic cutlery that looks like silver.” And Cummings buys seasonal paper plates and napkins each year right after Thanksgiving, when they go on sale, and saves them for next Friendsgiving.

**Make it BYOB.** Stocking a full bar gets expensive. Provide non-alcoholic soft drinks, and ask guests to bring their own wine or beer. If you have the time,

however, making a bowl of punch or a batch of mulled wine is a cheap way to pour alcohol in bulk. “An inexpensive way to create a delicious flavor profile in punch is to use tea as a base – it’s much less expensive than store-bought mixers, too! Try my recipe for [Clementine Ginger Tea Punch or Hibiscus-Gin-Pomegranate Punch](#),” said Chef Hartigan.

**Serve dinner buffet-style.** “It’s much easier to have people load up their plates in the kitchen, and then eat wherever they can – at the table, on the couch, standing over the piano – than a sit-down dinner,” said Nelson, who also scatters finger foods and appetizers around the apartment, so guests can find things to nibble on without going back to the kitchen. Chef Hartigan also suggested using Post-It notes to mark a spot for each dish on your buffet table ahead of time, and rinsing and placing all of your serving pieces in advance.

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