



# Good Friends Plus Good Food Make a Great Party & Roast Chicken

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Good friends always make for interesting and fun times. Add some good food and you have the makings of a wonderful party. Whether it's brunch, lunch, cocktails or dinner, all the best parties have really good food. I thought I was having a big "ah ha" moment when I put this particular two and two together a few years ago. Yes, yes. I know. It does seem pretty obvious. When I mentioned my epiphany to a friend her only response was, "well, duuuuhh."

After that first "well duh" moment, I've also figured out that some foods are more or less guaranteed to bring smiles. Of course nothing is fool proof but anyone who worries and frets about entertaining should rest easy. It is surprisingly simple to make people happy.

First of all, food does not have to be complicated to be good. You don't have to quit your job and move to Paris for a year to learn to cook well. Even if cooking intimidates you, all you need are with a few good recipes and wonderful fresh ingredients. The secret to success is to take a small step away from the everyday. Serve dishes that everyone loves but can't find the time or budget or just can't be bothered to make. Think about it ... when was the last time you made lasagna, cooked a rib roast or roasted a whole chicken?

### Here are a few tips for a crowd pleasing party:

**Everyone loves beef.** Well maybe not everyone, vegetarians tend to avoid it but pretty much everyone else. However, over the past several years, more and more people have cut back on beef. Put a great steak or beef tenderloin on your dinner party menu, cook it to perfection and your guests will feel like kings and queens. If tenderloin and sirloin are not in the budget, a pot of spicy chili or gorgeous braised beef will absolutely delight. Especially when it's cold, snowy, rainy or all three. And when the weather finally turns warm, is there anything better than a perfect burger? Remember, your party doesn't have to be fussy or fancy to wow your guests, just delicious and fun.

**Old fashioned dishes are sure to please.** These are the recipes that your grandma knew by heart and made if she was a good cook. One of mine was and the other, well, not so much. What was your nana's specialty; traditional New England chowder, roast pork with apples and onions or southern fried chicken? If you loved it as a kid, there is a good chance that your friends will love it today. One of my favorite party dishes is roast chicken. For two reasons. First, everyone loves it. And second, almost no one roasts a whole chicken anymore. Try it; your friends will enjoy a warm and wonderful evening and think you are a genius in the kitchen.

**Everything tastes better after it's been sprinkled with cheese;** especially when it's bubbly and golden brown. Mac and cheese is not America's favorite comfort food for nothing. Whether you start your party with warm bruschetta generously sprinkled with parmesan and Fontina, bake up a beautiful lasagna or serve a cheesy gratin as a side dish, your friends will sing your praises.

**End on a high note.** Who doesn't love dessert? For a fruity sweet, consider something a bit elegant like pears poached in red wine or warm and homey like apple crisp. On the other hand you can never go wrong with chocolate. From decadent chocolate torte to everyone's favorite birthday cake or brownies, what's not to love? In a hurry? Serve really good ice cream with thick and rich chocolate sauce and your guests will think they've died and gone to heaven. Whatever you prepare, your guests will savor and remember your wonderful dessert for days to come. Dessert not your thing? That's what bakeries are for!

Have a wonderful evening and

Bon appétit!

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**Roast Chicken**

*Fill the house with the warm, wonderful smell of a chicken roasting in the oven. For a homey dinner like grandma used to make, add some smashed potatoes and sautéed spinach. Enjoy!*

Serves 4-6

- 1 (about 6 pounds) roasting chicken
- 1 lemon, quartered
- 6 cloves garlic, peeled
- 1 medium onion, peeled, trimmed and quartered
- 1 teaspoon herbs de Provence
- Kosher salt and freshly ground pepper
- 1 cup dry white wine
- 1 tablespoon Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons cognac
- 1-2 tablespoons butter, cut in small pieces

Preheat the oven to 425 degrees. Remove the giblets and reserve for another use. Rinse the chicken inside and out and pat dry.

Put the chicken on a rack in a roasting pan. Sprinkle the chicken's cavity liberally with salt and pepper. Squeeze lemon juice over the chicken. Put the lemon pieces, onion and garlic into the bird's cavity. Sprinkle the outside of the chicken with 1/2 teaspoon herbs de Provence and liberally season with salt and pepper.



Put 2 cups of water in the bottom of the roasting pan. Loosely cover the chicken with foil.

Roast the chicken for 15 minutes. Turn the heat down to 375 degrees and continue roasting for 1 1/2 hours or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of the thigh reads 160 degrees. If the water in the bottom of the pan evaporates before the chicken is done, add some more. Remove the foil for the final 45 minutes of roasting.

Transfer the chicken to a platter and let it rest while you prepare the sauce.

Transfer the roasting pan to the stove top, add the wine, whisk in the mustard and remaining herbs and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat and simmer for 5-10 minutes. Add the cognac and butter and simmer, whisking, for about 5 minutes more. Check for seasoning.

Carve the chicken. Add any of the chicken's juices back to the sauce and strain the sauce into a sauceboat. Serve the chicken and pass the sauce.