

Pink Flamingo Cocktail Party



Have you been looking for the perfect solution for good times on a time and money budget? Life seems to be so hectic that we don't know our neighbors like we did in the neighborhoods of our childhood. The party is simple and makes it possible for everyone to take a break and enjoy each other.

The fun starts when someone sees a Pink Flamingo in a neighbor's front yard. This is the first sign that things are about to get exciting! Here's how it all comes together.



As the Host for the first party you place a Pink Flamingo in your front yard at the beginning of the week of the party. This is a cocktail party mid-week for an hour and a half. You will supply the cocktail snacks, plates, napkins and glasses and each neighbor will bring their drink of choice. Before the end of the cocktail hour, choose who will host the next Pink Flamingo Cocktail Party at their house and present them with the Pink Flamingo for their yard. You can choose how often to meet up after work for appetizers, a cocktail and a bit of conversation. This is an easy and inexpensive way to stay connected in the neighborhood.



Invitations



Place a flyer with information about the party in each neighbor's mailbox. You can get letterhead at a stationary store with Pink Flamingos on it and print the invitation.

You are invited to a Pink Flamingo Cocktail Party!

Where: Address of the party

When: Date

Time: 5:30-7:00 (they can come over right from work and be home early)

Food: Light Appetizers and Snacks

Cocktails: Bring your favorite drink for yourself

Dress: Casual and Comfortable



Menu

Three items for appetizers is plenty. Make sure there is a variety like a vegetable, a bread item and a protein. Below are some recipes but you can also pick up a snack that is not homemade at a local deli or Trader Joe's. Add a few store bought items along with one that you make and snap, you have a party going! Bowls of spiced nuts are a fun and easy addition.

Crispy Zucchini Rounds



Ingredients:

Cooking olive oil spray
2 eggs, beaten or Egg Beaters
2 medium zucchini (about 1 pound total)
1/4 cup freshly grated Parmesan (3/4-ounce)
1/4 cup panko (Japanese bread crumbs) can use bread crumbs also
1/8 teaspoon onion salt
1/8 teaspoon cayenne pepper
Ranch Dressing (prefer made from package not bottled)

Directions:

Preheat the oven to 450 degrees F. Coat a baking sheet with cooking spray.



Slice the zucchini into 1/4-inch thick rounds. In a medium bowl, toss the zucchini in beaten egg to coat. In a small bowl, combine the Parmesan, panko crumbs, onion salt, and cayenne pepper. Dip each round into the Parmesan mixture, coating it evenly on both sides, pressing the coating on to stick, and place in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet.

Bake the zucchini rounds until browned and crisp, 20 to 25 minutes. Don't over bake or the zucchini will become soft. Remove with spatula. Serve immediately with Ranch Dressing or marinara for dipping sauce.

Artichoke and White Bean Crostini

Recipe courtesy of Giada De Laurentiis



Ingredients:

Vegetable cooking spray
6 very thin slices prosciutto
Olive Oil cooking spray
1 French Baguette, cut 1/4-inch thick
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 - 14 ounce can artichoke hearts OR 1 - 12-ounce package frozen artichoke hearts, thawed
1 - 15 ounce can cannellini beans, rinsed and drained
1 cup grated Pecorino Romano
3/4 cup coarsely chopped fresh basil leaves
1 lemon, zested



3 teaspoons fresh lemon juice
1/2 teaspoons kosher salt
1/2 teaspoon freshly ground black pepper

Directions:

Put an oven rack in the center of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees. Spray a baking sheet with vegetable cooking spray. Lay the prosciutto in a single layer on the prepared baking sheet and bake for 10 to 12 minutes until crispy. Set aside to cool for 10 minutes.

On another baking sheet, arrange the bread slices in a single layer. Spray with Olive Oil cooking spray on both sides. Bake until golden, about 12 to 15 minutes. Flip to toast both sides. OR place under broiler to toast but watch carefully so as not to burn!

In a food processor, combine the artichoke hearts, beans, cheese, basil, lemon zest, lemon juice, salt, and pepper. Pulse until the mixture is chunky. With the machine running, slowly add 1/4 cup of olive oil. Spoon the artichoke mixture onto the crostini. Crumble the prosciutto and sprinkle on top.

Mango Chipotle Chicken Wings



Ingredients:

1 1/2 cups mango, peeled, pitted and roughly chopped
3/4 cup fresh cilantro (loose pack, not chopped, stems and all)
2 chipotle peppers in adobo, plus 1 tablespoon adobo sauce
2 tablespoons unseasoned rice wine vinegar
4 cloves garlic, peeled
2 tablespoons fresh lemon juice
1 tablespoon canola oil, plus extra for grill
2 teaspoons kosher salt
1 teaspoon freshly cracked black pepper
2 pounds chicken wings

Directions:

Put the mango, cilantro, chipotle, vinegar, garlic, lemon juice, 1 tablespoon of oil and salt and pepper, in a food processor and puree until smooth. Adjust seasonings, to taste.

Add the chicken with half the mango mixture to a resealable plastic bag, and massage to coat the chicken with the sauce. Refrigerate at least 6 hours to marinate.

Put the other half of the mango mixture into a small saucepan and simmer over low heat until thick, stirring often, about 15 minutes. Set some of the simmered chipotle-mango sauce aside to serve on the side and baste the chicken every few minutes with the rest of the sauce.

Preheat a grill or grill pan to medium-high heat and brush with canola oil. Remove the chicken from the marinade and put on the grill.

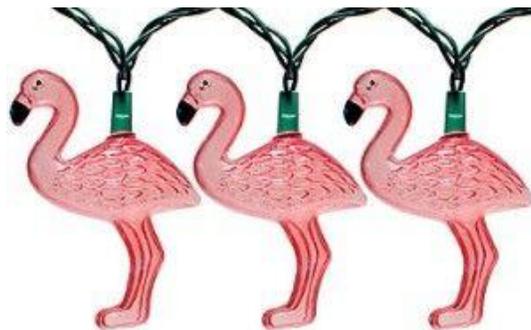
Grill the chicken turning and basting about every 5 minutes until cooked through, about 20 to 25 minutes. Transfer to a serving platter and serve with the reserved mango sauce.



Create the Mood

The mood is casual and friendly so it is easy to prepare for the party.

1. Choose an area of your home or backyard where people can easily mingle. Make sure there is comfortable seating with tables to place the drinks and snacks while they talk.
2. Choose an area for the food and drinks that is separate from the lounging area. You will find that groups will gather around the food and in the cocktail area. If you can create a couple seating areas, you will encourage your guests to congregate there which is more conducive to mingling than hanging out around the food.
3. Get a bunch of seasonal flowers and divide them into 3 smaller bunches in vases at the food and drink table and in the 2 seating areas. If you want to add more pizzazz to the party decorate with **Pink Flamingos** in the cocktail area.



4. Place cocktail napkins, small paper plates and plastic glasses and forks beside the food station. If you can find napkins with Pink Flamingos on them, that adds to the fun of it all!



5. Select music that will last for the whole cocktail hour and will be a nice background to the conversation. Jazz or music from the 40's usually works very well.
6. Relax and enjoy your neighbors. You may be surprised by how much you have in common, the networking possibilities and new friendships that arise from this simple get together.

