



How to Host a Fail-Proof Friendsgiving



THE FAMILY DINNER PROJECT

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Holidays are a time for gathering with the people we care about. Sometimes that means sharing a meal with family, but not always. Friends can be our chosen family, whether on the actual holiday itself or as part of an additional special celebration. Enter Friendsgiving, an increasingly popular way to observe the holiday.

Around 20% of Americans have reported celebrating Friendsgiving in recent years, and younger people in particular tend to favor it over more traditional family holiday meals. Friendsgiving fans say it's a more laid-back, fun, and flexible way to mark the occasion. Everything from the date and time to the menu and socializing can be planned to suit the unique preferences of your friend group. But many Friendsgiving attendees are still looking for a bit of a traditional vibe; over three-quarters of respondents in one survey said they hoped to create new and lasting traditions at their Friendsgiving celebrations.

If you're hoping to create just the right Friendsgiving vibe, read on for food, fun, and conversation ideas to inspire your gathering!



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Choose Your Date(s)

The biggest question of Friendsgiving is “When?” Are you planning an alternative celebration for Thanksgiving Day, or hoping to hold a separate, additional gathering sometime during the month?

Depending on the answer – and the type of event you’re planning – you might choose a few different possible dates and run them past your potential guests to pick the day and time that work best for everyone.



Decide Who to Include

Friendsgiving is for everyone! But that doesn’t mean all your friends can, or will, show up for the big event, especially if you’re holding it on the holiday. Think about who will be most likely to attend, who gets along well, and who may really need or appreciate an alternate celebration, like friends who can’t see their families this year.



Envision Your Vibe

The flexibility is part of the fun! Are you and your friends elegant cocktail party people, or would you prefer a pajama brunch? Do you want a nostalgic potluck or a takeout buffet? Think about what sounds like the most fun for you and your chosen crew, and make sure to set expectations (or get input) up front so everyone is prepared to enjoy your unique Friendsgiving event.





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Food

There's no denying that the food is a pretty important part of Friendsgiving. But you've got options! You don't have to feel stuck with a traditional Thanksgiving menu unless that's important to you.

One of the great things about Friendsgiving is the opportunity to pitch in all together and make the celebration a reflection of everyone's efforts. Unless you really love to do all the cooking, we highly recommend sharing the workload. Try some of these ideas for a meaningful Friendsgiving feast!

Traditional Tastes

If you can't bear the thought of giving up the turkey dinner, go for it! But we suggest assigning side dishes to your guests to share the work and expense. Try sending around a sign-up sheet so you don't end up with 4 bowls of mashed potatoes, or ask your friends to bring a favorite recipe their families would have prepared when they were kids.

Themed Thanksgiving

If you're willing to go off-script, picking a theme could be a fun way to liven up the menu! You could choose a region of the world or type of cuisine, pick an era (like 1950s recipes), run with an idea like all-finger-foods or pies only, or ask guests to bring a dish that starts with the same letter as their name. Again, just make sure to provide a signup sheet to help coordinate the plan!

Cooking Competition

Do your friends like to cook? Are you up for some good-natured competition? Then maybe you'd like to host a more challenging celebration! Assign the same dish to two different people, and have a taste-off for the best Friendsgiving stuffing, pies, or potatoes.



Takeout Treat

If budgets and tastes allow, you might have a relaxed celebration with takeout contributions from everyone's favorite restaurants! Support local businesses by having each guest bring a purchased dish or two to share, or you can set up a suggested per-person contribution towards a large order from one place you all agree on.

Hands-on Holiday

Maybe your group of friends is a bit more adventurous and ready to get hands-on together. You could choose a new type of recipe to learn how to make together, like rolling sushi or folding dumplings, and assign friends to bring the ingredients for a big cooking party where you all watch instructional videos and practice new skills to make your meal!

Leftovers Remix

If you're having your Friendsgiving in the day or two after the formal holiday, you could always put everyone's leftovers to good use with a remix party! Either make a buffet meal out of all the dishes of Thanksgiving leftovers your guests contribute, or get extra creative by awarding prizes for the best "remix" of leftovers into a new and tasty dish to share.

Recipe Swap

Make Friendsgiving the gift that keeps on giving with a recipe swap and take-home portions! Ask each guest to make a double batch of their favorite soup, stew, or casserole and provide printed recipe cards for each person. Make sure you've got freezer-friendly containers ready so everyone can bring home portions of their favorites, along with the recipes to make them again.



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Fun

One thing Friendsgiving fans love about it is that they say it's often more fun and less stressful than their family holiday get-togethers. Of course, just being together with your friends can be fun all by itself, but you can take things to the next level – and build possible Friendsgiving traditions – with some well-chosen games and activities. You can try a selection of classic board and card games, or choose from some of these suggestions!



PLAY A RAPID FIRE INTERVIEW GAME!



Pineapple on
pizza?
Yes or No?

Coffee
or Tea?

Cats
or Dogs?

Sneakers
or Sandals?

Sunrise
or Sunset?

Poolside or
Beachside?

Email or
Handwritten
Note?

Books or
Movies?

Chocolate
or Vanilla?

Paris or
London?

Sweet or
Savory?

Crunchy
or Chewy?

Summer or
Winter?

Earth or
Space?

Pancakes
or
Waffles?

Plane or
Train?

Hike or
Bike?

Art Museum
or Science
Museum?

Mountains
or Ocean?

Cold pizza for
breakfast?
Yes or No?





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DINNER GAMES

The Hat Game

Before dinner, have each guest write their answers to one or more of the following questions on slips of paper and place them in a hat. At dinnertime, the host reads the answers aloud, and everyone tries to guess which guest gave which answers!

- What is a book that transformed your life?
- What character in a children's book did you most identify with as a child?
- What was your favorite toy as a child?
- What do you feel most grateful for?
- What do you love most about being a part of this (or your) family?
- What animal would you most like to be?



DINNER GAMES

TOP FOUR

Before the meal starts, everyone gets four slips of paper. Each person writes a phrase or item on each slip (for example, "Clean Sheets," "Snakes," "The Grateful Dead,").

The slips go into a jar on the table. At dinner, one person (the "leader") starts by drawing four slips of paper from the jar and reads them aloud. Then the leader privately puts the slips in order of preference, from most favorite to least. At the same time, the other guests write down the order in which they think the leader would place things. The leader reads their list, and whoever guesses the leader's list order gets a point.



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DINNER GAMES

Selfie Hot Potato

Choose a cell phone with a good camera. The first person sets a timer on the cell phone for 90 seconds or less. Don't tell people at the table how long the timer is for — not knowing increases the suspense.

Once the timer is set, start passing the phone around the table. Whoever is holding the phone when the timer goes off has to stop and take a selfie! Then reset the timer for a new amount of time, and keep passing the phone. Ideally, by the end of the game, there will be at least one photo of each person in the gallery, and you'll have a photo record of your gathering!



DINNER GAMES

Photo Caption Contest

Ask everyone to bring old photos to dinner. Stick them up on a board or on the wall. Pass out Post-It notes and pens, and let everyone write a funny caption to match each photo! Enjoy reading them aloud afterward and vote for your favorites.

Or you can try a variation: Instead of bringing printed photos to dinner, allow people to use their phones at the table to pull up different images from their camera rolls, social media, or other favorite sources.





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WOULD YOU RATHER?



Would you rather be the funniest person in the room, or the smartest?

Would you rather have X-ray vision, or supersonic hearing?

Would you rather have tickets to the Super Bowl, or play in the Super Bowl?

Would you rather be rich working a job you hate, or poor working a job you love?

Would you rather meet one of your ancestors, or one of your future descendants?

Would you rather have an extra finger, or an extra toe?

Would you rather have a personal maid or a personal chef?

Would you rather be able to call a “do-over” once a day, or be able to delete bad memories?

Would you rather live in a zoo on exhibit, or live in total isolation for a year?

Would you rather spend the night in a haunted house, or spend a week on “Survivor?”

Would you rather it snowed inside, or have leaves continuously fall on your bed?

Would you rather stay this age for the rest of your life, or live forever but always look 100 years old?

Would you rather be covered in feathers or fur?

Would you rather turn different colors based on your mood, or always have to speak in questions?

Would you rather take a road trip, or have a luxury spa weekend?

Would you rather always have the same song stuck in your head, or always have the same dream?

Would you rather be famous with a stressful life, or unknown with a peaceful life?

Would you rather be able to speak every language, or play every instrument?

Would you rather go a whole day without seeing, or a whole day without hearing?

Would you rather be entirely covered in hair, or entirely bald everywhere?



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Holiday Movie BINGO

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Someone drinks cocoa	A gift mishap	It's snowing	Last minute shopping	Turkey dinner
Travel problem	Cookies and milk!	Fire in the fireplace	Festive print sweater	Holiday lights
A letter or wish list	Reindeer	Pause: Family dinner	Someone reads a storybook	Kids in cozy pjs
Candle light	A first kiss	A sing-along	A change of heart	Talking toys
A bell rings	Candy canes	A crowded mall	Something flies	A tree disaster



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Conversation

Although it may feel like you and your friends will never run out of things to talk about, sometimes it's fun to mix things up with some new questions and topics. Try these conversation starters to make your Friendsgiving interesting and memorable for everyone!

**RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION**
TALK ABOUT: SHARING YOUR STORIES





- Tell us about a pet you've had (or have now) that has enriched your life. Do you have any funny or touching stories about that pet you'd like to share?
- Tell us about one moment or day in your life you'd like to live over and over again.
- Think of a person who taught you something meaningful or important. Tell us about that person. What did they teach you? How has it impacted you?
- Talk about a book, movie, or TV show you would make your "desert island" entertainment. What makes it the perfect choice for you?
- Have you ever taken a trip that changed you in some lasting way? Tell us about it.



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RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION

TALK ABOUT: MUSIC



- What is the greatest song ever written?
- If you could only listen to 3 albums or artists for the rest of your life, what would you choose?
- Are there any songs or types of music that remind you of specific memories?
- If you could learn to play any instrument, what would you choose and why?



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RECIPE FOR CONVERSATION

TALK ABOUT: MOVIES AND TV



- If you could spend a day in the world of any movie or TV show, what would you choose and why?
- In a movie made about your life, who would play you? What about your friends and family members?
- If you could only watch one movie or TV show for the rest of your life, what would it be?
- What's the best TV series finale of all time?
- What's the show or movie that made you laugh the hardest? Cry the hardest? Made you most uncomfortable? Made you feel the most content?