HOST THOUGHTFULLY 005

Make Contributions Fit the Plate



ACCEPT SOMETHING THAT FITS THE MENU.

When someone asks what to bring, give a specific request or a warm ‘Just yourselves.’ A useful contribution should support your planned plated dinner and reduce the decisions you need to make at service.

1 Give a complete assignment

Specify the item, quantity and whether it should arrive ready to use. A particular wine, bakery bread or dessert can be easier to coordinate than an unspecified dish.

Why: A clear request prevents duplication and keeps the contribution connected to your menu.

2 Check how it will be served

If a guest contributes food, agree how it will become part of each plate. Confirm ingredients, refrigeration, reheating and any utensils or equipment it needs.

Why: An unexpected dish may compete for the oven, refrigerator or attention just as you are plating.

3 Receive gifts without replanning

Thank someone for an unexpected food or wine gift. You can enjoy it another day rather than feeling obliged to open or serve everything immediately.

Why: Appreciating a gift does not require rebuilding the dinner around it.

USEFUL WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

A specific bottle

‘A bottle of the white wine we discussed would be lovely. I have the food covered.’

Bread that fits the course

‘Could you bring one loaf from your favorite bakery? I will slice it and include it with the first course.’

A dessert ready for plating

‘Would you bring the tart? Let us confirm the ingredients and size, and I will have plates and the accompaniment ready.’

A deliberate collaboration

If you want a friend to prepare a course, coordinate it as part of the dinner. Decide who will finish and plate it, using the same care as the other courses.

THE PLATING MINDSET

Coordinate contributions around the planned plates. Guests should not need to solve your menu, and you do not need to improvise around every gift.