

# Chow Line

News from the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences

## Make water festive for holiday gatherings

**We are hosting several parties over the holidays. Many of our friends are more health-conscious these days, and I would like to serve some healthy but festive beverages. Any ideas?**

Clean, fresh water is among the healthiest beverages out there. It's calorie- and sugar-free and, when you get it from the tap, it's about as inexpensive as you can get. The Harvard School of Public Health has gone so far as to state outright that "water is the best choice" for quenching your thirst and rehydrating your body, which uses water in every one of its biochemical reactions as well as for metabolism, breathing, sweating and removal of waste.

Choosing water or other calorie-free or low-calorie beverages has benefits all year round. Replacing two 20-ounce sugary soft drinks a week with a calorie- and sugar-free option saves nearly 25,000 calories and more than 1,700 teaspoons of added sugar over the course of a year. So, your guests will likely thank you for serving water in some way.

You could also consider providing other healthful options in addition to tap water, such as sugar-free sparkling flavored waters, nonalcoholic beers and sparkling ciders at the wet bar. Another idea: Make a simple nonalcoholic punch from a variety of juices, iced tea and club soda, and keep it cool with an ice ring made of water and pureed fruit.

Or, you can just add some punch (not literally) to water from your kitchen tap to dress it up for a holiday party. Although some of us can think of nothing more refreshing than a glass of crisp cold water — straight up or on the rocks — some people might find it less than festive.

Here are some ideas that will help your water make a splash (again, not literally) during the holidays:



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- Slice cucumbers and add them to the pitcher along with sprigs of slightly crushed fresh peppermint. The result is a cool, refreshing, thirst-quenching drink.
- Add raspberries, blueberries and blackberries. Allow them to be slightly crushed as you stir them in with ice. You may want to have a cocktail strainer on hand to allow guests to choose whether the berries flow into the glass or not. Either way, the water will have a subtle sweetness.
- Opt for a citrus or melon theme: Slice lemons, limes and oranges or cut chunks of cantaloupe, honeydew and watermelon and let them float in the pitcher.
- Think ahead and freeze fruits into ice cubes that you add to the pitcher, so the water contains even more fruit as the ice melts.

In addition, put some thought into the container itself. A nice clear glass pitcher is fine as a fallback, but consider other options, too, including a wine carafe or a large beverage dispenser with a spigot.

And finally, no matter what you might add to water for your party guests, keep food safety in mind. Thoroughly rinse fresh fruits and vegetables under running water before adding them to the container. For citrus fruits or vegetables with a rind, like cucumbers, scrub them with a vegetable brush as you rinse.

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**Editor:** This column was reviewed by Carol Smathers, Ohio State University Extension field specialist in Youth, Nutrition and Wellness.

*Chow Line is a service of the College of Food, Agricultural, and Environmental Sciences and its outreach and research arms, Ohio State University Extension and the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center. Send questions to Chow Line, c/o Martha Filipic, 2021 Coffey Road, Columbus, OH 43210-1043, or [filipic.3@osu.edu](mailto:filipic.3@osu.edu).*

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