



## Preparing for Holiday Houseguests

**Beat holiday fatigue by preparing for holiday houseguests with this 12-day countdown guide.**

Ease your holiday burden by planning the holiday menu before guests arrive. Then set out all your supplies and recruit holiday guests to help you prepare the meal.

Ding dong. Expecting houseguests at your farm this holiday? Skip last-minute panic by breaking down your preparations into 12 easy steps. You can accomplish one small task each day prior to their visit, ensuring you have both your sanity and serenity intact when they arrive.

With an early start, tasks that used to cause stress can blend into the festivities, adding a dose of homespun holiday fun. Planning for holiday houseguests keeps things merry on multiple levels: Not only are your guests filled with holiday cheer thanks to your thoughtfulness, but you become a relaxed host with ample time to savor your friends and family.

### Day 12: Envision Your Wish List

Pour yourself a cup of cocoa, and focus for a few minutes on the holiday guests coming to visit your farm. Envision your ideal holiday, being specific in how it should unfold. Perhaps you see yourself spending quality time with each of your guests, feeling like you really had the chance to catch up and connect during their visit. Now is the time to think about and list your priorities, so you can make sure they happen.

### Day 11: Be a Guest in Your Own Home

Sleep in your guest room to make sure it's comfortable and welcoming. Making simple tweaks, like oiling a squeaky doorknob or adding a reading lamp on the nightstand, can go a long way toward making your guests feel at home.

### Day 10: Plan the Holiday Menu

Write out your full holiday menu, including everything from the appetizers to the dessert finale. Think about recipes that showcase the abundant garden produce, incorporating items you've freshly picked or put up for the winter, gifting your guests with a taste of your farm. Crack open those pickle jars and bring up the butternut squash from the root cellar. Holidays are a time to savor and celebrate the farm.

### Day 9: Invite Guests to Help Cook

When planning your holiday menu, include ways for guests to help in the kitchen prep. From chopping vegetables to stirring the soup, these tasks gift you with multiple rewards: less work for you and more time with your guests.

### Day 8: Display Photos

Dig out the family albums for holiday guests to peruse. Rekindling old memories can spark many conversations, particularly between older and younger generations.

### Day 7: Communicate Holiday Logistics

Call your holiday guests before their arrival to communicate directions and coordinate travel plans. This provides an opportunity to remind holiday guests what kind of clothes to bring, such as boots for hiking outside or warm slippers if you have cold farmhouse floors.

### Day 6: Organize for Kids

Plan age-appropriate activities for the younger generation of holiday guests. A scavenger hunt is a fun way to keep the kids happily occupied outside: Create a list of 25 items they need to find outside, such as acorns or animal tracks. Remember to include some quiet activities for inside the house, such as a table with art supplies or classic children's videos.

### Day 5: Designate a Photographer

As the busy holiday hostess, it's easy to forget to take photos. Connect with a few of your guests who love to take pictures, and ask them to be official holiday photographers. They probably will be tickled and, knowing this ahead of time, will go out of their way to include you in the shots.

### Day 4: Add a Warm Glow

Think beyond candlesticks on the dining room table, and add a dash of warming light with a candle in the bathroom or on the kitchen counter. Welcome guests to the farmhouse by adding a row of luminaries up your driveway. Make the luminaries by placing tea lights in small paper bags filled with sand or snow.



#### Day 3: Check the Weather

With unpredictable weather, keep an eye out for storm fronts that might affect guests' travel. Have a "plan B" to deal with weather delays. Keep a pot of soup simmering on the stove to provide as a warm and welcoming snack for holiday guests at the end what could be a bumpy journey.

#### Day 2: Set the Holiday Table

Focus on tasks you might typically do on the holiday itself that could easily be done a few days before, like setting the table. These projects cause stress if you do them on the actual holiday (where's the gravy bowl?), but sprinkling in some extra time allows for fun and creativity, like adding a pinecone next to each place setting for a touch of whimsy.

#### Day 1: Relax and Enjoy

Remember to take time for personal pampering before the holiday guests arrive. Take a long, hot bubble bath followed by a nap. Relish this relaxed state of being, thanks to the time and effort you took to prepare for your holiday houseguests. Now comes the icing on the cake: greeting folks with a welcoming hug as they walk in your door and sharing your holiday together.

About the Author: Lisa Kivirist writes from Inn Serendipity, her farm and bed-and-breakfast in Wisconsin, which is completely powered by renewable energy and specializes in local, seasonal, organic cuisine. She is co-author of *ECOpreneur* and *Rural Renaissance*.