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PLAN FOR SUCCESS

There's no denying hosting a get-together at home can be a lot of work. Florencia Vazquez, co-founder and director of Chapa Catering and Events, says getting a caterer on board to do all or part of a larger event can save you time and stress. "Many people underestimate the amount of time it takes to host and the stress involved," she says. "When you do have an event catered, it's easy, just like bringing the restaurant to your own home."

Florencia suggests thinking about the end goal of the event and how you want it to look. That will shape how you plan and style the event. "Some people want to tie the look into the style of the house, others want to go a little bit more experimental, with colours or themes," she says.

When you are planning an event, choosing a theme can add to the fun. "For example, you might choose a Mediterranean night and your menu and decor, flowers and decoration can reflect that," says Florencia. Another tip she has is to have a signature cocktail on arrival. "Also have canapes, small bites or a grazing table ready for your first guests, as not everyone arrives at the same time," she notes.

If you do plan to serve up your own food, having waiters and servers on hand can make it a more relaxed affair. "It takes away all the pressure of serving your guests and you can take a step back and sit down and relax," explains Florencia. You can also have an event partially catered; for example, some people prefer to offer their own grazing table, then Florencia's staff will serve a couple of courses and people might do their own desserts.

Whether you want a buffet, shared plates or guests being served when they sit down, the choice is yours. Florencia says with sit down, everyone is sitting and chatting as the food comes to the table. "It creates a feeling of warmth, however setting up a buffet table can be a little less labour intensive," she points out.