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NOVEMBER 2014

NOW

Living in the Season

At Home With Frank
and Betsy Jones

SPECIAL SECTION:
2014 Holiday
Shopping
Guide

Flight Path

Dennis Akins soars toward his dreams

Reflections
Planning the Perfect Party
Sharing Sweets
In the Kitchen
With Melinda Bradley

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ON THE COVER



Every fall, Frank and Betsy Jones enjoy sprucing up their yard.

Photo by Michelle Winters.

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Editor's Note

Hello, Friends!

The month of November includes a number of holidays and observances. Veterans Day falls on November 11, and community members will honor those who have served in the U.S. Armed Forces. The Parker County American Legion Post #163 will host a Veterans Day Parade in Weatherford on November 8.

If you are ready to kick your smoking habit, the Great American Smokeout on November 20 may be the perfect time to do so. Visit www.cancer.org to find tips on how to quit.

Thanksgiving falls on November 27. Many residents will travel to see loved ones or prepare meals in their own kitchens. Remember to share what you're thankful for on "turkey day." On Black Friday, local retailers will slash prices and offer discounts to entice shoppers into stores. If you choose to brave the crowds, I hope you get those unbelievable deals!

Enjoy yourselves!

Amber

Amber D. Browne
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Planning the Perfect Party

— By Amber D. Browne

The hustle and bustle of preparing for the holiday season can be quite all-consuming. Adding a dinner party or overnight guests to the equation can increase the stress. Whether you're taking on the challenge of hosting friends for dinner or family in the guest room, having a plan in place is the key to a fun-filled occasion.

When planning a holiday get-together, first decide who is on the guest list. You could choose to invite a few of your closest friends or a group of 20 or more. Or family

could stay for the extended holiday. In either scenario, plan the date and set a time for the holiday dinner.

Incorporating a theme is a key component to any event. The holiday itself can be used in planning for decorations, music and games, but if it's a dinner for friends, choosing a fun theme may be a good choice. Pinterest or event-planning blogs feature a variety of theme options.

Keep the following in mind if you choose to host a holiday dinner:

1. What is your budget?
2. Will it be a sit-down or buffet-style dinner?
3. What type of decor will you use?
4. Is the dinner adults-only or will children also attend?
5. What type of music and entertainment will be incorporated?



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Budget:

The budget should include funds for food, beverages, decor and entertainment. If you plan to hire a caterer, a printer for invitations or even a cleaning crew, include those costs in the budget as well. If you don't want to host the event at your home, a local restaurant or rental facility may be the perfect place to gather. Include any rental fees in the budget. Setting aside additional funds for last-minute costs is also a good idea.



Food & Beverage:

Planning the menu ahead of time is a priority. Cookbooks, the Internet or cherished family recipes offer delicious choices for holiday meals. If you are planning a themed meal, stick with recipes that fit the motif.

If you don't want to spend time prepping and cooking the food, hiring a caterer is an option. Many caterers provide dinnerware, serving dishes and utensils, flatware and related items. On-site caterers can help with cleanup, too. For easier cleanup or a more casual event, purchase disposable dinnerware and flatware, and make trash cans readily available to guests.

When hosting a party, you may decide to serve alcoholic beverages. You can stock the bar yourself or advise guests to bring their own alcoholic beverages. Hiring a licensed bartender to serve

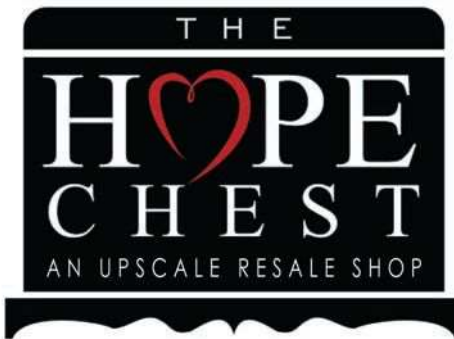


drinks during the event is another option. Don't forget to provide nonalcoholic beverages and have extra ice on hand. For guests who may overindulge, have a taxi service phone number available.

Venue, Decor & Entertainment:

Preparing your home for guests can be an undertaking, but a clean home creates a relaxed atmosphere. Stock the bathrooms with toilet paper, soap and clean or disposable hand towels. Offer guests a safe place to leave coats and purses. Lighting the fireplace or candles throughout the home creates a cozy ambience, but don't forget to extinguish the flames after the party!

Fresh flowers can brighten any table. You may choose to purchase arrangements from a local flower shop or buy seasonal flowers to create your own arrangement. Cranberries are popular this time of year and can be incorporated into the arrangement. Add one to two bags of fresh cranberries to a clear vase. Fill the vase about three-quarters full with water. "Using a sharp knife, carefully cut the ends off the fresh flowers at a 45-degree angle. Add cut flowers to vase, arranging as needed," explains a how-to page at OceanSpray.com.



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If children and teenagers are invited, set a separate table for them. Using real dinnerware will create a more formal atmosphere and adding amusing trinkets to the table will keep the younger crowd entertained. Place holiday crackers, which hold small toys, at each table setting as a fun addition.

For entertainment, themed music can play during the event. You can incorporate games, too. For a guessing game, you can purchase a nice container and add individually wrapped candies. Make sure to count the candies first! Display the candy container alongside a jar, paper and pens for guests. Guests can write down how many candies they think are in the container and place their guesses in the jar. The one closest to the actual number wins the candy-filled container!

Overnight Holiday Guests:

Find out beforehand what types of snacks and drinks your guests prefer, and stock the cupboard and refrigerator. When planning the meals, get your guests' input. Be sure to find out if they have any food allergies. Many overnight guests may want to help out in the kitchen and chip in on food.

An inviting guest room is a necessity. You want your guests to feel at home when they visit. Provide clean, comfortable bedding, a night light and a couple of bottles of water on the night stand. The guest bathroom should include everyday grooming items, including soap, shampoo, conditioner and cotton swabs. Include plenty of fresh towels, extra toilet paper and air freshener.

Keeping your guests entertained during their stay can be a challenge. Why not plan a shopping trip with your female guests and send the men off to play golf? Whatever you choose, don't stress! Your guests will be happy to spend quality time with you.

Hosting parties and overnight guests can take a lot of time before, during and after, so ask for help. Many hosts and hostesses often find themselves too busy to enjoy their hard work. Don't let that happen to you. Take time to sit back, chat with your guests and enjoy yourself! **NOW**