

# DEPARTURES

Wine & Spirits

## Celebrity Chefs Share Tips for Planning an Unforgettable New Year's Eve Party



A New Year's Eve party can be a difficult celebration to host, but these tips will make for a memorable party.

By Jonah Flicker on November 13, 2018

The expectations for revelry are outsized, there's a lot of competition going on, and if the energy starts to flag no one is going to stay awake to watch the ball drop. There are, however, some valuable pointers for [hosting a successful New Year's Eve get-together](#).

At the [Savor Borgata](#) food festival in Atlantic City, several well-known celebrity chefs showed off their culinary skills at events throughout the weekend, including the Ultimate Food Experience at which Wolfgang Puck took home the trophy for his grilled wagyu steak and seared gnudi dish. These chefs, along with a few luminaries in the hospitality world, took time to speak with *Departures* to offer some tips on throwing a successful New Year's Eve party at home or at a venue.

### Chef Michael Symon (Angeline, Roast, Bar Symon)

"Prepare things that you can prep ahead of time, are hand-held, and [go well with champagne](#)—baked clams, a fun raw bar (shrimp, crab, a little bit of tartar). No one wants to feel really weighed down on

New Year's Eve, so keep everything very light. You don't want to spend the whole night slaving away in the kitchen while everyone else is having fun."

## Chef Geoffrey Zakarian (The Lamb's Club, The Water Club at Borgata, The National Bar & Dining Rooms)

"As a host, your job is to make everybody feel good. So take yourself out of the equation. On New Year's Eve, you have to make everybody else happy, because in general, they're on the edge of not being happy. It's a tough holiday. I'm a caviar junky, so I love having caviar. Try to have really good champagne—something really dry like a brut—and lots of it."

## Chef Wolfgang Puck (Spago, CUT, Wolfgang Puck American Grille)

"A New Year's Eve party is one thing I would splurge on. Buy some good smoked salmon, some oysters, maybe some caviar. I have very expensive tastes, so my favorite champagne is Krug, maybe a rosé. I like them older, maybe from the '90s, at least 15 years of age. Make the dessert ahead and something like a gratin, so you don't have to cook all day. Make sure you can spend time with your friends and family instead of sweating in the kitchen."

## Chef Michael Schulson (Izakaya, Graffiti Bar, Harp & Crown)

"For me, entertaining is all about keeping it simple because I like to enjoy the party. Skewers are great—put meat on a stick, or shrimp on a stick, or vegetables on a stick. It looks like you slaved away for a long time, but you really didn't do much. For cocktails, I always make pitchers—margaritas, bloody Marys, mimosas, and even a perfect Manhattan. The key to that is not to put the ice or soda or Prosecco in the mixture. Make a card with instructions—'Fill here with cocktail and top off with champagne to here.' People think it's really cool."

## Chef Bobby Flay (Bobby Flay Steak, Gato, Mesa Grill)

"If I'm cooking on New Year's Eve for my friends, they expect some kind of decadence. I think it's important to bring in the luxury ingredients. I always serve everything family style so there's an

abundance of food and people take what they want. It also makes it a lot easier for me so I can get to the dining table and hang out with my friends. Usually, there's a cocktail and people drink tons of champagne. I like Dom Perignon."

## Restaurateur Greg Sherry (Old Homestead Steakhouse)

"There's good meat available everywhere to purchase for cooking at home. The difference between going to a restaurant and making it at home is that restaurant ovens go to 1,600 degrees, which locks in that char. If you want to cook meat at home, I suggest doing a roast on New Year's Eve. Get that prime rib, turducken, turkey, or rack of lamb, and roast it."

## Bebhinn Gallen, Director of Catering at Lotte New York Palace

If you choose to throw your New Year's Eve party at a hotel or other venue instead of at home, Gallen has some tips: schedule it far in advance, as there is often limited availability. Hire great entertainment for your guests. Set up a buffet with a seasonal menu focusing on winter flavors like pumpkin and squash. And turn your large party into a weekend event by including overnight rooms or a car service, so guests don't drink and drive.

## Aimée Van Lingen, Assistant Group Conference & Events Sales Manager at Conrad Dublin

"Make sure to pick a venue that is centrally located so you are guaranteed easy access with public transportation, taxi, or luxury transfers. You will also be close to the bar scene if you wish to continue the night in a club in the city center. A cocktail reception is a great way for everybody to greet each other, and you can set up a welcome table to know who has arrived. You want to ensure that the venue you choose has amazing service. To make an event unforgettable, a creative and bespoke cocktail and food menu is the first thing to request."