

el gusto

BROUGHT TO YOU BY



THE HOSTING HANDBOOK

Special Weekend & Overnight Guest Entertaining Planner



Edition 3.0

Planner Overview & How To Use

Welcome to the Hosting Handbook

This handbook has been created as a planning tool to help you prepare for a memorable and enjoyable hosting experience, while ensuring your guests feel welcomed, comfortable, and well cared for throughout their stay.

This handbook is designed to help you:

- Prepare for a weekend of hosting, including overnight and/or overseas guests.
- Create a welcoming environment that helps guests feel relaxed, informed, and included, plus caring for their needs.
- Spread preparation across the weeks leading up to the event, making planning more manageable and less overwhelming.
- Use practical checklists and suggestions to stay organised and reduce the effort of remembering every detail yourself.
- Focus on enjoying the occasion and spending meaningful time with your guests.
- There is no expectation to do everything—instead, we encourage you to take what is useful, adapt it to your circumstances, and create an experience that feels right for you and your guests.
- The handbook is divided into chapters that follow the natural stages of the hosting journey, from early planning through to the event itself. You can work through it step-by-step or simply dip into the sections most relevant to you. Even if you discover just a few useful ideas or time-saving tips, we hope it adds value to your hosting experience.
- Throughout the handbook, you'll also find Mrs Gusto's Tips, drawn from years of experience hosting visitors, family gatherings, special events, and guests from near and far. Her practical suggestions are designed to help you create a warm, enjoyable experience for your guests while keeping hosting simple, achievable, and rewarding for you.

Remember: great hosting isn't about perfection—it's about helping your guests feel welcome and creating enjoyable memories together. This handbook is simply here to help make that a little easier.



Planner Overview & How To Use

We suggest reading through the entire guide to get a clear understanding of what's included in the handbook, and to help you decide how you would like to use it.

DIGITAL OPTION

All the checklists, brainstorming pages and templates can be used on your computer or phone. Any cells highlighted light blue can be edited so you can fill and mark off as you go. Make sure you save your changes each time so you don't lose your notes.

PRINTED OPTION

You're welcome to print out the whole book and handwrite on it if you prefer. Alternatively, if you only wish to print the templates, simply click the Print button in the bottom-right corner of each template to download a printable version.

EXCEL OPTION

If you prefer working in Excel, an Excel version of the templates is also available. This can be filled in, edited and updated on your computer, making them a great option if you like to plan, track and organise everything in one place, and it can easily be shared with your home helps so you can plan together.

INSPIRATIONAL ARTICLES

From Chapter 3 onwards, you will see lots of links to Inspiration Articles. If you are an El Gusto subscriber, you can click on any of these links and it will take you to the El Gusto website articles, including links to recipes. If you're not a subscriber, you will only have access to the free articles - why not subscribe today and enjoy the full benefit of amazing recipes and inspiration especially for people like you!

INTERACTIVE FOR MOBILE

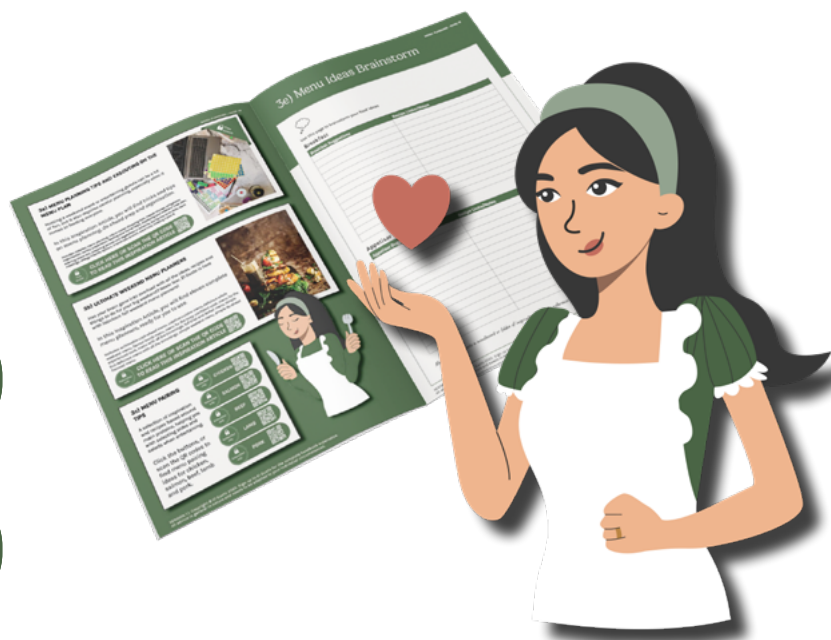
When using this on a mobile device, to use the fantastic interactive function on the checklists please click on the image of the pencil in the bottom right corner once you have downloaded the Hosting Handbook. This will take you to an Interactive PDF version. Don't forget to save your changes as you finish each session on your phone, then you can go back to this PDF file on your mobile device and keep adding to it over your planning journey.



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THE HOSTING HANDBOOK



Contents

These chapters are in a sequence that works well when planning your special weekend entertaining. Work through the chapters in order, allocating tasks to your calendar or diary throughout the weeks of your journey leading up to your special weekend entertaining.

You can simply click on a chapter name in the contents page and you'll be taken straight to that section.

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*Take the time to read through
the Inspiration Articles on the website
that are listed throughout this handbook.
They include a wealth of valuable
menu and entertaining tips to
make your weekend entertaining
more enjoyable.*





1. Suggestions For Initial Planning

Wow! The news has come through: you have visitors coming. Where do you start? To save brain overload, many hosts have found it useful to start working through this initial checklist, mapping out their timeline for the weeks ahead.

1a) Initial Planning Checklist



Initial Planning

✓	Task	Links/Notes	Deadline
	Decide what accommodation you can offer		
	Organise helpers and babysitters		
	Arrange for any home improvements (e.g. handyman, plumber)		
	Book up window cleaner, gardener, cleaner, carpet cleaner, car detailing (otherwise book time slots in your diary for each of these tasks before the visitors arrive)		
	Re-schedule any appointments/meetings on these dates of the meetings		
	Declutter (see pages 17-19 for Spring Cleaning Advice)		
	Consider vehicle space - may need to hire a car		
	Do you need any new appliances?		
	Have you got enough fridge/freezer space?		
	Create a space for extra beds, bedding, food, appliances etc.		
	Brainstorm menu ideas - select freezer-friendly recipes, make-ahead menus (see pages 25-26 for the Menu Brainstorm Template)		
	Organise outfits for the family to wear (for during entertaining and meetings)		
	Set up your calendar to allocate tasks to each week leading up to the meetings		
	Brainstorm places to take visitors (if necessary)		
	Organise a few small gifts for visitors (small, easy to pack and take through customs, or organise your gift to be delivered to their house once they have arrived home)		
	Organise helper gifts		
	Check bedding quantities, provide extra pillows (borrowing is a good cost saver)		
	Check towels on hand so you can provide/wash towels daily (it is ideal to have a spare set to swap over the weekend. Bath sheet size towels are good for brothers and provide hair towels for sisters)		
	Check mattresses & pillows for comfort and suitability		
	Check you have enough suitable drinking glasses, wine glasses, plates, cutlery		



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1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 1 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 2 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 3 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 4 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 5 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 6 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 7 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							

1b) Weekly Planning Calendar



Week 8 Commencing:

Tasks	Lord's day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Cleaning							
Cooking							
Outdoor							
Indoor							
Other							



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2. Spring Cleaning Suggestions

Sometimes it's too early to start cooking in your preparation journey, so this could be the best time to get in and do some spring cleaning! It is such a nice feeling to tackle those larger projects and declutter.

2a) Spring Cleaning Checklist

No need to do it all, simply choose the tasks that work for you. If you run an all year round, deep cleaning zone system in your home, you may be already on top of some tasks, which is a great help.



✓ Admin Suggestions
Create a shared list on a task app for the family (e.g. Google Keep, Microsoft To Do, or Todoist)



✓ Bedroom Suggestions
Do a clothing clear out (donate any unwanted clothes, and pack up your out-of-season clothes)
Clean wardrobes and drawers for visitors
Clean and sanitise mattresses



✓ Laundry Suggestions
Descale iron
Declutter and use up old laundry products
Clean and sanitise washing machine
Allocate a place for 'guest only' washing in a drawer/cupboard/basket
Check if ironing board cover needs replacing



✓ Bathroom Suggestions
Deep clean bathrooms (give all bathrooms a deep clean and save one for family use)
Create room for the spare hand towels and bathmats for each guest bathroom in vanity units/storage with labels
Tidy bathroom cabinets
Organise your bathroom cleaning products (add an organised box of these items to all bathrooms)
Descale shower heads, clear sink/shower traps
Clean bathroom tiles and grout



✓ Kitchen Suggestions
Defrost and clean freezer (write a list of everything and use up any leftovers before entertaining)
Clean food and drinks fridges
Tidy/sort kitchen cupboards (remember to keep note of what needs replacing and add onto a shopping list)
Clean dishwashers and top up salt/rinse aid
Clean filters in coffee machine
Clean deep fat fryer and replace oil
Deep clean ovens, microwave, hostess trolley
Reorganise pantry items and label
Clean bar and drinks cupboard
Check filter on instant filtered boiling/chilled water system
Sharpen knives



✓ General Suggestions
Clean windows inside and out/book your window cleaner
Carpet and rug cleaning
Clean wall scuff marks/radiators/dust woodwork
Repainting/touch-ups (for touch-ups, go around with a small amount of paint in a disposable cup)
Clean fireplaces
Car deep clean (include seatbelts)
Refresh car deep clean closer to weekend



✓ Outdoor Suggestions
Tidy garden
Clean wheelie bins
Clean out gutters
Trim trees and hedges
Clean BBQ and utensils
De-cobweb outdoor furniture



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2b) Mrs Gusto's Tips on Spring Cleaning

DEFROST AND CLEAN OUT FREEZER

Plan to use this food in the upcoming weeks so you can concentrate on prepping, rather than cooking meals. Repack existing frozen goods back into one section of the freezer to make room for your weekend entertaining food.

TIDY AND SORT KITCHEN CUPBOARDS

Try putting any unwanted items you find on a local chat (for sale or for free). Consider borrowing items from family or friends outside the locality, this will save you money and storage.

BATHROOM CLEAN OUT

Take all soaps that are nearly used up and put into bathrooms that are used daily to use these up. Lights, walls, ceilings and window coverings can all be cleaned ahead of time.

ORGANISE YOUR BATHROOM CLEANING PRODUCTS

It's helpful if each bathroom has its own set of cleaning products, gloves, and cloths.

CLOTHING CLEAR OUT

Having guests stay in your room is a great opportunity to sort out your clothes. Donate any unwanted clothes, and pack up your out-of-season clothes. This makes moving out of your room in a few weeks a much easier task.

'GUEST ONLY' WASHING SPACES

Make room for 'guests only' washing in a drawer, cupboard or basket. This will help helpers to know which washing is priority.





3. Meals, Menu Planning & Drinks

Menus! El Gusto is behind you all the way. Equip yourself by reading the tips from our experienced hosts around the world on the Inspiration Articles, and use the templates to seamlessly coordinate your menu.



Free Article

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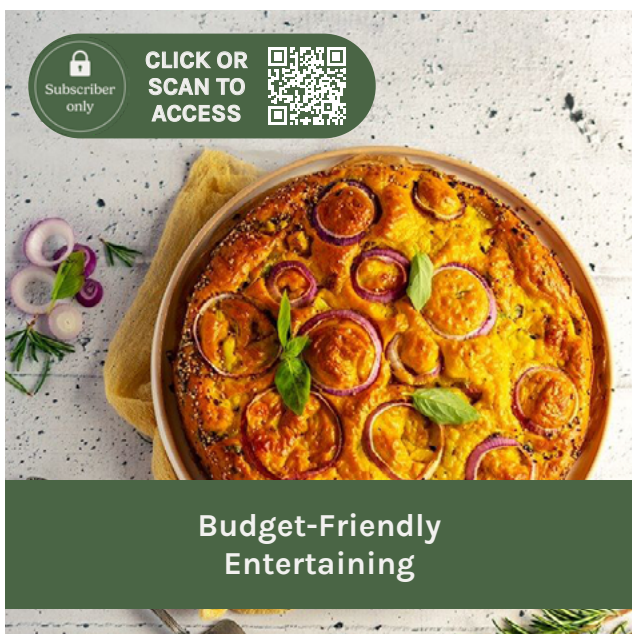
Menu Planning & Execution Tips



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Ultimate Weekend Menu Planners



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Budget-Friendly Entertaining



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Mrs Gusto's Food Freezing Tips & Recipes



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Allergy-Friendly Tips & Tricks



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Simple Starters to Impress and Tips



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Mrs Gusto's Simple Presentation
Ideas to Impress



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Assembling a
Snack Tray Video



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Entertaining Platters
Recipe Collection



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Preparing for
Lord's Day Morning



Menu Pairing Tips



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SALMON



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BEEF



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PORK



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LAMB



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CHICKEN





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Breakfast Recipes



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Appetiser Recipes



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Snack Tray Recipes



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Lunch Recipes



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Mains Recipes



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Side Dish Recipes



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Vegetable Recipes



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Salad Recipes



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Dessert Recipes



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ACCESS



After Dinner Recipes

This is just the beginning!

There are so many more Recipe Collections, designed to make your event a great success!

Click here or scan the QR code to access 'All Recipes'.



Entertaining Menus



CLICK HERE OR SCAN THE QR CODE
TO VIEW ENTERTAINING PLANNERS



3a) Menu Ideas Brainstorm



Use this page to brainstorm your food ideas

Mrs Gusto Tips:

Create a mood board or folder of inspiration images to reference later.

Try to always have some frozen options or baking on hand so you find entertaining easier. Store bought items are a good backup if needed and you can always add your own personal garnishes.

Breakfast

Breakfast Suggestions	Recipe Links/Notes

Appetiser

Appetiser Suggestions	Recipe Links/Notes

Mrs Gusto Tip:

Don't stress yourself out with taking on too much fancy food, it's all about enjoying the company.



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3a) Menu Ideas Brainstorm

Main

Main Suggestions	Recipe Links/Notes

Dessert

Dessert Suggestions	Recipe Links/Notes

Sweets & Snacks

Sweets & Snacks Suggestions	Recipe Links/Notes

Mrs Gusto Tip:

Create a mood board or folder of inspiration images to reference later.



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3b) Menu Planning Template



Weekday Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		



3b) Menu Planning Template



Thursday Evening Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		



3b) Menu Planning Template



Friday Breakfast Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Sweet		
Savoury		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		


[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES](#)




Friday Snacks:

Quick snacks to have on hand through the day	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes

3b) Menu Planning Template



Friday Main Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		

3b) Menu Planning Template



Friday Evening Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		



3b) Menu Planning Template



Saturday Breakfast Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Sweet		
Savoury		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		


[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES](#)




Saturday Snacks:

Quick snacks to have on hand through the day	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes

3b) Menu Planning Template



Saturday Main Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		

3b) Menu Planning Template



Saturday Evening Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		



3b) Menu Planning Template



Lord's Day Breakfast Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Sweet		
Savoury		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES](#)

3b) Menu Planning Template



Lord's Day Main Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		

[CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES](#)

3b) Menu Planning Template



Lord's Day Evening Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		

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Monday Breakfast Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

[illegible]

3b) Menu Planning Template



Monday Meal:

Date:	Number:	Adults:	Children:
Time:	Special Diets:		

Course	Serving Dish / Presentation / Garnish / Notes	Recipe Notes
Starters / Snack Tray		
Main		
Dessert		
Drinks/Extras		
Notes		
CLICK HERE TO ACCESS PRINTABLE TEMPLATES		



This page can be used to record your cooking and baking tasks for your freezer, fridge and pantry. Use colour coded labels for freezer items, even fridge items. Different colour each day/meal. Can also colour code the outside of the freezer itself so that each shelf is assigned to a day

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PRINTABLE TEMPLATES



3d) Drinks

CONSIDER THE WEATHER: Summer = white spirits. Winter = darker spirits.

IF DOING COCKTAILS: Plan options and ingredients in advance, have the recipes on hand over the weekend.

PRINT A COCKTAIL & MOCKTAIL MENU: Place it on the bar for guests to know what is available.

DRINK PREFERENCES: Keep track of drink orders/preferences for both strong drinks and teas/coffees (e.g. milk preference, sugar etc.)

ICE: Reminder re back-up ice bags (ensure some in cold storage).

BEROCCAS & HYDRALYTES: Have Beroccas and Hydralytes available, could make up a tray ready in the morning.

WATER: Water offered regularly and available around the house

ROOM SERVICE: It works well to deliver hot drinks and cool drinks to small tables outside the guests' bedroom doors.

3e) Cocktail Recipes



OLD FASHIONED

Mix 2 tbsp simple syrup with 3 dashes Angostura/orange bitters in bottom of whisky glass, muddle. Add 60ml bourbon and ice cubes, stir well in full smooth rotations.

Peel 1 orange for garnish. Squeeze some orange juice into cocktail to finish, garnish with orange peel.



DARK & STORMY

Fill a glass with ice cubes then squirt 1/2 tbsp lime juice over the ice. Add ginger beer, almost to the rim of the glass.

Top with 2 tbsp dark rum and let the rum trickle down through the ice. Garnish with lime wedges and a sprig of rosemary.



MOSCOW MULE

Fill a glass or a copper mug to the top with ice. Add 60ml Vodka and 15ml lime juice.

Top with 120ml ginger beer. Slap a mint sprig and place in the top with a wedge of lime.



CLASSIC ESPRESSO MARTINI

Place 40ml vodka, 20ml Kahlua coffee liqueur and 30ml chilled espresso in a cocktail shaker with ice. Shake the cocktail shaker vigorously about 10 times then pour quickly into a martini glass.

Scrape in the foam as well. Garnish top with 3 coffee beans and serve immediately.

3f) Mocktail Recipes



MARGARITA MOCKTAIL

Run a lime wedge around a margarita glass rim, then dip in salt to coat. Shake 25ml lemon juice, 25ml lime juice, and 45ml simple syrup.

Fill the glass with crushed ice and pour over the mixture. Add 120ml orange sparkling water, stir, and garnish with a lime wedge.



MOJITO MOCKTAIL

Add 10 mint leaves and 1 lime wedge to a glass; muddle to release flavour.

Add 2 more lime wedges and 2 tbsp sugar, muddle again. Fill the glass with ice, top with 125ml soda water, and stir. Adjust sugar to taste and garnish with extra mint and a lime wedge.



SPA WATER MOCKTAIL

Add 30ml lime juice and 15ml simple syrup to a glass with 4 cucumber slices and 5 mint leaves; muddle.

Fill with crushed ice, top with sparkling water, and stir to combine. Garnish with a cucumber slice and mint.



ROSEMARY CITRUS REFRESHER MOCKTAIL

Muddle 1 rosemary sprig in a glass. Add juice of half a lemon, half an orange, and 1 tbsp maple (or simple) syrup; stir.

Fill with ice, top with sparkling water, and stir gently. Garnish with a rosemary sprig and citrus slice. Enjoy!



MAPLE GINGER MOSCOW MULE MOCKTAIL

Add 25ml maple syrup and juice of 2 limes to a shaker with ice and shake vigorously for 10 seconds.

Strain into a glass with fresh ice, top with 150ml non-alcoholic ginger beer and stir gently. Garnish with mint and lime slices.



ESPRESSO MARTINI MOCKTAIL

Brown sugar syrup: Boil 190ml water with 180g brown sugar until dissolved. Remove from heat, stir in 1/2 tsp vanilla, cool. Fill a shaker 2/3 with ice. Add 60ml espresso, 45ml Seedlip Spice 94, and 30ml syrup. Shake hard ~30 sec, strain into a martini glass. Shake remaining liquid briefly, pour in, garnish with beans.



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SCAN THE QR CODE TO DOWNLOAD PRINTABLE
COCKTAIL AND MOCKTAIL BAR CARDS





4. Suggestions for Home & Guest Room Prep

We all want to make our guests as comfortable as we can, and cater for their every need! This chapter includes valuable tips from those who have hosted many times and templates to help you plan out your event.

4a) TIPS AND TRICKS FOR HOSTING OVERNIGHT VISITORS

Handy tips, tricks, and templates for hosting overnight visitors, featuring 11 practical ideas to help you deliver six-star service—from meal prep and personal touches to guest room essentials and weekend planning.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ
THIS INSPIRATION ARTICLE



4b) HOST SCHEDULE TEMPLATE

When you are entertaining weekend guests, the usual household routine can quickly go off track, but with a little planning you can keep everyone on the same page. In this Inspiration Article, you will find a handy template for a weekend schedule you can share with home helps.



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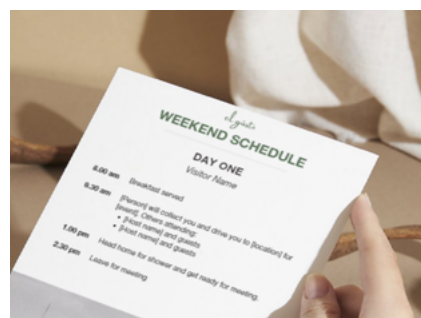


4c) SCHEDULE TEMPLATE TO GIVE TO GUESTS

One thoughtful way to help your guests feel welcomed and prepared is by providing a personalised weekend schedule—click below to access two easy-to-use templates, including a one-page version and a flyer-style format.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ
THIS INSPIRATION ARTICLE



4d) GUEST ROOM WELCOME SIGN AND WI-FI DETAILS TEMPLATE

Hosting guests is all about making them feel at home, and this Inspiration Article helps you do just that with editable welcome and Wi-Fi sign templates, making it easy to share essential information in a warm, personal way.



SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ
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4e) ROOM SERVICE DOOR HANGER TEMPLATE

Make your morning routine a whole lot simpler with this room service door hanger template, for your guests' morning beverage order!



SCAN THE QR CODE TO READ
THIS INSPIRATION ARTICLE



Guest Room Care Pack Suggestions

✓

1

✓

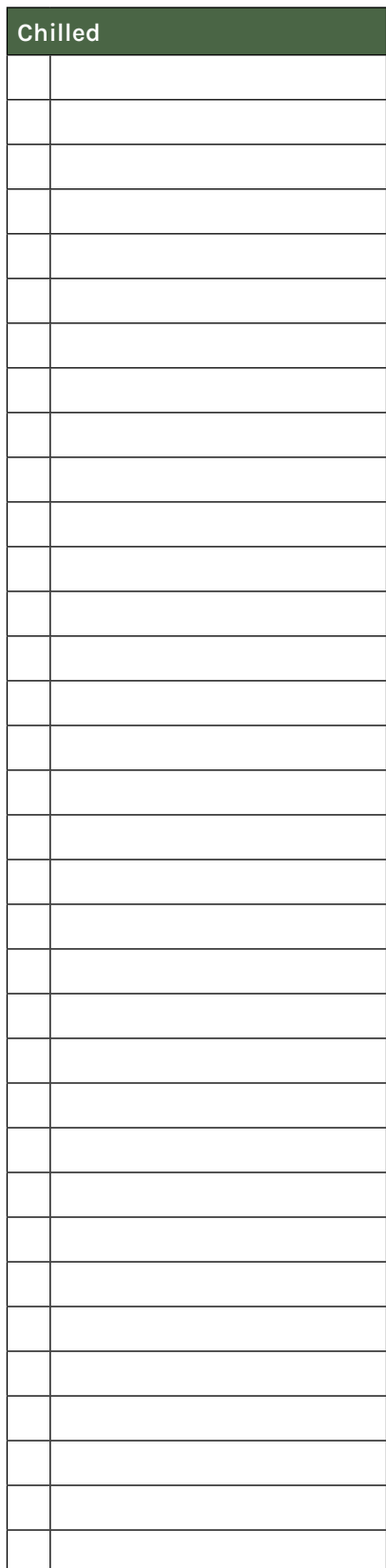
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5. Shopping Suggestions

Thinking through and buying everything for the event is a big project, but being organised will make the event more enjoyable. This section includes some check-lists and tips that may be of assistance.



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5b) Grocery Food Checklist Tips

Once you have decided your menu, it's time to start making your shopping lists.

You might want to do a few lists, such as shopping lists for cooking, freezer items, bulk foods, essentials, etc. It's sometimes handy to use an app on your phone for this.

SHOPPING SUGGESTIONS/TIPS:

3 weeks out: Buy up drinks

1 week out: Buy general groceries

Day before: Buy fresh vegetables (this can be an order placed online on weekend before to be delivered on Thursday)

HERE ARE MRS GUSTO'S TOP SHOPPING TIPS:

"When I'm going through working out what to make, I always do a list on 'Keep Notes' or the 'To Do' list on my phone, so I always have it with me when I'm at the shops; it's so handy!"

"When you are physically going to a store to shop, group the food items by their department or shop layout (i.e. dairy, meat, frozen etc.) as this can save lots of time while shopping."

"Ordering groceries online and booking pick-up saves time and impulse buys."

"Use your supermarket app to start buying items like soft drinks, bath and shower products, cleaning products when they come up on special. Put these aside in boxes in your garage, and you're meeting-ready without the panic."

"Book your supermarket online deliveries in advance so that you get the slot you need before the weekend. Also helpful to book one for during the weekend for anything you run out of or have forgotten !!"



5C) FEEDING A CROWD - MRS GUSTO'S GUIDE TO MEAT AND MEAL PORTIONS

It's difficult to put a number on how much meat, potatoes and vegetables to allow per person when hosting a meal, however these are some of Mrs Gusto's tips.

In this Inspiration Article, you will find tips on amounts of meat and vegetables to serve based on the number you're hosting.

Includes: uncooked meat allowances per person, lamb allowances per person, cut potato allowances per person, roast vegetable allowances per person, what to do with leftovers.



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Here to lend a hand...

Mrs Gusto
Your Entertaining Advisor

*Ask your 'burning' entertaining,
menu or recipe questions here!*



5d) Supplies Checklist



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Soft Drink Options	Quantity	✓
Coke - original/diet/zero		
Lemonade		
Ginger ale/ginger beer		
Tonic water		
Soft drink mixers (lemon, orange, guava, agrum)		
Cordial		
Fruit juice		
Soda water		
Sparkling water		
Still water		
Ice		
Energy drinks		
Lemon/lime/garnishes		
Cocktail & mocktail ingredients		
Consider sugar free options		
Alcohol-free beer & wine		



Hot Drink Options	Quantity	✓
Coffee beans/ground coffee		
Tea bags		
Specialty teas (chamomile, green, peppermint, berry)		
Milk (plus any dietary milk, e.g. almond)		
Artificial sweetener		



Cleaning Supplies	✓
All-purpose surface cleaner	
Floor cleaner	
Carpet cleaner	
Scrub brushes	
Stain remover	
Bleach	
Glass cleaner	
Microfibre cloths	
Stainless steel cleaner	
Kitchen cleaner	
Oven cleaner	
Leather cleaner	
Dusters	
E-cloth reusable cloths	
Latex gloves	
All-purpose/kitchen/bathroom wipes	
Dishwasher tablets and salt	
Washing up liquid	
Bin liners	
Shoe polish	

5d) Supplies Checklist



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Tip: run through your menu and list out items that can be bought ahead and keep another shopping list separate for the final week before entertaining (fresh groceries).

Cooking + Dining Supply Options	Quantity	✓
Serviettes, placemats and snack plates		
Foil, clingfilm, baking paper, ziplock bags for food prep and leftovers		
Foil trays (for pre-made cooking, BBQ etc.)		
BBQ supplies (gas, briquettes, firelighters, kindling, logs, cooking spray)		
Deep fry oil		
Meat		
Pantry groceries (crackers/sweets/baking ingredients)	Quantity	✓



Other	Quantity	✓
Toilet rolls, paper towel		
Bedroom supplies (see checklist on page 50)		
Gifts for visitors		
Lightbulbs		
Spare filter for instant filtered boiling/chilled water system		
Shampoo & conditioner/shower gel/body wash/shower caps		
Sewing kit/stain remover wipes		
Clothes hangers		
Ironing - spare iron water/lint roller/iron/ironing crisp/anti-static spray		
Sunscreen		



6. Table Setting Suggestions

We always love more inspiration in this space. Having this planned and documented ahead of the event makes it much easier for your helpers at the time. Browse the Inspiration Articles to learn what others have done for their events.

6a) Table Planner Template

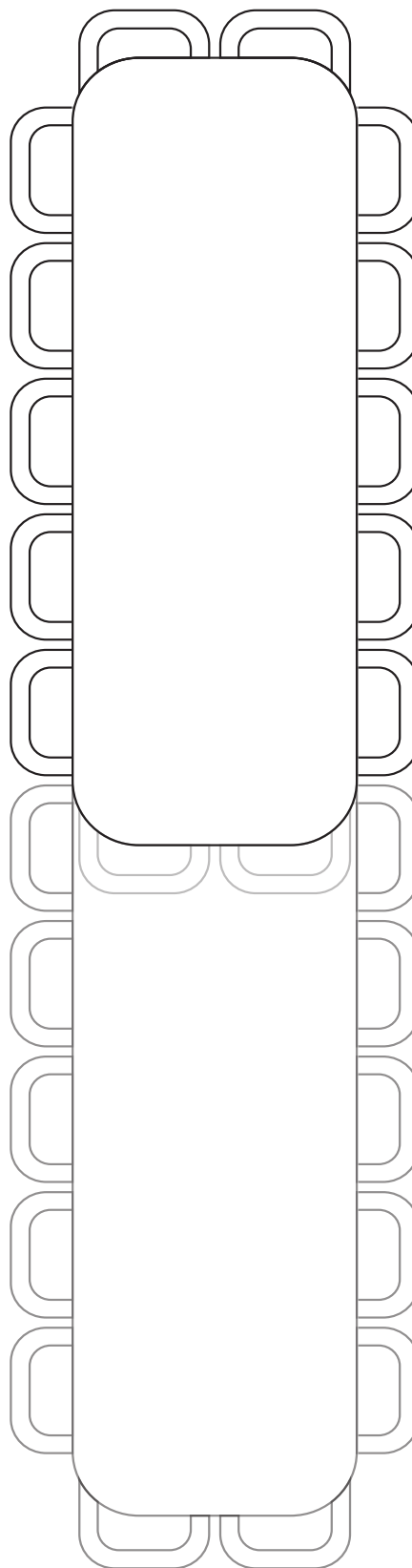


Seating Plan

It is great to have the helpers put name tags out once the table plan is confirmed so the guests know where to sit.

Conversation starters are great for the host to have prepared to ensure a bright and happy guest experience.

Be mindful of where you place main guest speakers to assist the conversation. Also, be thoughtful with your elderly guests who may be hard of hearing.



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6b) TABLE SETTING TIPS AND TEMPLATES

Setting the table may seem like a minor detail, but it's one that can greatly enhance the overall dining experience for your guests. Here's some of El Gusto's top tips!

In this Inspiration Article, you will find tips and templates to create beautiful entertaining table settings easily.

Includes: pre-fold napkins, pre-print name cards, set plates and napkins, plan for extra guests, curate ideas in advance, prepare table linens, plan how you'll serve, create a memorable experience.



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6c) TABLE CENTREPIECES FOR DINING OR BUFFET TABLES

What can I use as a centerpiece for my table? Anything you choose!

In this Inspiration Article, you will find tips for creating a beautiful tablescape, as well as inspiration images.

Includes: tablescaping inspiration, tips for creating an aesthetic table.



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6d) NAME TAGS AND MENU CARDS

If you're stuck for name tag inspiration, look no further! Here is a selection of templates for name tags and menu cards, editable and customisable.

In this Inspiration Article, you will find five editable name tag templates, and four editable menu card templates.

(SEE FOLLOWING PAGE FOR EXAMPLES)

Includes: name tags and menu cards in several designs such as black border, buon appetito, fresh lemon and a countryside design.



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6e) Mrs Gusto Menu Card Tips

MENU CARDS

Menu Cards on the table improve communication, they help guests identify each dish/item, and having 'allergy friendly' items labelled on the menu card (such as GF or DF etc) let guests know what is suitable for them.

If it's a pass around meal, menu cards given out with the snack plates helps the guests know exactly what is being served and when, so they can pace their food intake.

Check out our editable menu card and name tags below.

NAME TAGS

Name tags at the table make it easy and efficient for guests to find where to sit. Thoughtful seating can help conversation flow naturally around the table, and you can arrange for the care of little children, high chairs, elderly and special needs.

For meals where guests may not be familiar with who everyone is, consider placing each guest's name on both sides of their stand-up name card. This makes it easy for everyone to see and use each other's names, helping conversation feel more natural and personal.



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YOUR MENU CARD & NAME CARD TEMPLATES





7. Suggestions For Prep Closer To The Event

Mrs Gusto loves doing as much ahead as she can to make the event more enjoyable! This section provides helpful templates and tips to work through breaking down the tasks over the weekend, and mapping out the many task lists.

7a) Personal Invitation & Planning Your Guest Experience

A WARM WELCOME

A personal warm invite soon after you receive your visitors list for the event helps make your guests feel welcome.

- Check the guest list for allergies or special needs but always double-check personally with the guests before they come as well.
- Ask them what they prefer to drink so you can have the correct beverages on hand. Keep track of drink orders/preferences for both strong drinks and teas/coffees (e.g. milk preference, sugar etc.)
- Some have sent their guests a survey for them to fill in with their preferred options for all the above questions, plus if they like tea or coffee in the morning, and what milk they prefer etc.
- Share updates with your guests before they come to stay, or for a meal, e.g. who else will be present (if not allocated on Connect), bring a jacket if sitting outside, or wear suitable clothes if sitting out near a fire.
- Where possible greet your guests at the door as a household when they arrive and communicate to them to them any updates about the event and make them feel at home.

GUEST COMMUNICATION & CARE

Maybe start a group chat with all your guests for the below:

- Notify them of the plans for their visit so they can pack suitable clothes and shoes, and include advice on the usual and predicted weather for that time of year.
- If all your guests are arriving at once, put your guest bedroom instructions onto the chat so the guests can be aware when they arrive.
- You may also use this chat over the event for notifications, meeting times, meal times, any communication, e.g. asking guests for hot drink orders, washing service, or to use fresh towels. Every little bit of communication helps your guests!

These are simple, easy tips that have a lot of impact on your guest's experience.

HELPER TIPS

For your helpers, send them a video of the kitchen layout before they arrive, or ask them to unpack the dishwasher when they arrive, so they learn where everything lives. This can also include appliances and how to run them.

Have regular Zoom calls with them before the weekend so they are familiar with the weekend plans.

Mrs Gusto Tip:

*Guests may not remember every detail, who was there or what they ate,
but they will always remember how they felt.*

7b) Instructions for Helpers



Section	What to Know	Details
Keys/garage remote		
Alarm code		
Wi-Fi		
Spare keys		
Fuse box		
Door and window locks		
Heating/cooling		
Hot water		
Ovens		
Coffee machine		
Washing machine/dryer		
Bins		
Nearby shops		
Rapid deliveries (include login details, card details, etc.)		
Laptop/tablet login details		
Meeting room address		
Closest Community neighbour contact		
Emergency contact numbers (police, hospital, etc.)		
Allergies/medications		
First aid kit		
Orbit emergency contact (Orbit can arrange for a leaking pipe to be repaired, a sewer to be unblocked or other required repairs to be completed)		



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7c) Supply Locations for Helpers



Cleaning products, cloths, napkins, soaps, towels, bedding, tablecloth, cutlery, etc.
Spare drinks, ice/ice machine, snack tray items, garnishes, sauces/condiments etc.

Kitchen Supplies	Location	Spares
Cleaning Supplies	Location	Spares
Bedroom Supplies	Location	Spares
Bathroom Supplies	Location	Spares



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7d) Babysitter Notes



Routines, favourite food, sleep times, comfort items, medication, etc.

Routine	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Food	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Clothes	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day

Occupation / Transport / Tips / Notes



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7e) Prep for Overnight Guests

Indoor Preparation

Item	Deadline	✓
Set table/sort seating plan/menu cards/name tags		
Put scannable Wi-Fi sign in front entry for guest use (inside a photo frame works well)		
Make space in coat cupboard and have a quality umbrella available		
Check Ministry sets and make sure no volumes are missing		
Prepare coffee machine		
Conversation starters list		
Check shoe cleaning kit has black shoe polish		
Provide clear instructions for guests on how to work showers, cooling/heating, blinds		
Prepare snack plates/serviettes		
Plan final cleaning		
Check first aid and car care kits are restocked (items to include in car care kit are mints, lollies, paracetamol, antihistamine, umbrella, pens, notebooks, water, small snacks such as muesli bars)		
Small drinks tables for lounge/seating areas		
Create a designated area in freezer for leftovers. Make available containers, bags, masking tape, permanent markers for labelling them up. Instruct helpers on what you want to keep/discard		
Have a loaf on hand, and set of cloths/cup/baskets etc if required		

Outdoor Preparation

Item	Deadline	✓
Tidy garden/alfresco/paving/clean BBQ		
Sweep porch and patio		
Mow lawn & trim hedges, recharge batteries on blowers		
Check BBQ supplies - firelighters, charcoal, briquettes, lighter, foil trays, oil, paper towels, BBQ utensils, spare gas bottle		
Portable heating (if required)		
Planning fires - ensure wood is cut up and dry in advance, kindling, matches		
Check all external lights are functioning and no globes need replacing		
Set automatic sprinklers to come on at a time that won't impact guests including shower times		
Insect repellent		
Outdoor bin, dustpan & brush		



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7f) Room Service Checklist



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Ironing	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Laundry (Washing tips: Hang in separate washing line areas/separate dryer loads per guest)	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Shoe Cleaning	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Hot/Cold Drinks - Morning & Evening	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day
Bedroom Refresh (e.g. top up water bottles, freshen towels, empty bins, wipe over ensuite)	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Lord's Day

7g) Mrs Gusto's Tips on Task Lists

To help make these occasions smooth and enjoyable, task lists are your best friend.

They allow you to break down your day into manageable steps, stay organised, and ensure nothing important slips through the cracks.

From prepping food and last-minute cleaning tasks, a well-structured task list that you can share with your home helps, helps you stay in control and enjoy the moment.

Refer to pages 28, 30, 34, 38, 42 to plan your tasks for your entertaining days and take the stress out of hosting.

7h) Mrs Gusto's Folder for Helpers

PRINTED HELPERS MANUAL/INFORMATION FOR THE WEEKEND

It's such a help if you have a printed folder with all the information required for the weekend, in one place for your helpers!

Mrs Gusto suggests printing the following about a week ahead, and binding or putting the pages into a clear leaf folder so you can edit or add notes in pen as you go:

- Menu Planner Templates (this includes menus and task lists) - Pages 27-44
- Print all recipes to be used over the weekend or include QR codes to the recipes on your Printed Menu
- Table Seating Plans, Name Tags & Menu Cards - Pages 59-61
- Instructions for Helpers & Task Lists - Pages 64-69
- Weekend Host Schedule - Page 49 (4b)
- Orbit correspondence
- Visitors list
- Arrival and departure times
- Meal allocations
- Any guidelines or other necessary information
- Include some cash for your helpers for extra grocery shopping over the weekend



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TITLE PAGE TEMPLATE TO
USE FOR YOUR PRINTED FOLDER





8. Tips for After The Weekend

You did it! Congratulations! Now that the visitors have left, it's time to unwind, reflect and soak in the joy of moments shared. Mrs Gusto loves to get back into routine as soon as possible. Here are some of her tips..

8a) Mrs Gusto Says ‘Take a Break!’

And it's over... you did it! Congratulations on hosting a wonderful weekend.

Before you tackle the clearing up, reallocation of beds and endless washing, make sure you take some time to catch your breath!

However, if you can get the floors vacuumed and mopped after everyone has gone, the next week will be easier.

If you have a laundromat near you and it's in the budget, this is a great way to get your sheets and towels done efficiently.

As daunting as it seems, it's a good idea to tackle the fridge early on too. There will be so many bits and pieces that can be used up, frozen, or made into a quick meal that you will be grateful for in the next few days.

See the article below, it's excellent for ideas of what will freeze from your fridge, and how to freeze food well.

Browse some of Mrs Gusto's best advice on creative ways to use up your leftover food.

Above all, take a well-earned rest and enjoy the memories created through entertaining.



8b) CREATIVE WAYS TO USE UP LEFTOVER CHICKEN

The weekend is over, you're tired and in need of a break. Luckily, you've got leftovers to make next week's meals simple and efficient.

In this Inspiration Article, you'll find Mrs Gusto's top tips on creative ways to use up leftover chicken.

Includes: eighteen recipes for using leftover chicken, Mrs Gusto's tip for avoiding dryness when reheating chicken.



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8c) CREATIVE WAYS TO USE UP LEFTOVER PORK

The week after an entertaining weekend can often be difficult - luckily though, you've got leftovers to make your meals easy!

In this Inspiration Article, you will find Mrs Gusto's tips and recipe recommendations for using up leftover pork roasts.

Includes: six recipes for using leftover pork.



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8d) TASTY WAYS TO USE UP LEFTOVER SALAD AND SALSAS

Leftover salad is often uninspiring - so here are some of Mrs Gusto's top tips for using up all those odds and ends and turning them into something delicious.

In this Inspiration Article, you will find Mrs Gusto's tips for using up leftover salad components and salsas.

Includes Mrs Gusto's tips for saving salad components and recipe recommendations.



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8e) DELICIOUS IDEAS FOR USING UP LEFTOVER BEEF

Cooked enough beef to feed an army? Never fear, El Gusto is here! Take those tasty leftovers and turn them into delicious lunches and dinners.

In this Inspiration Article, you'll find Mrs Gusto's recipe recommendations, and tips for using leftover beef.

Includes: Mrs Gusto's tips for reheating beef, twelve recipe recommendations.



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Thank you for using The Hosting Handbook for your special event.
We hope it helped make your event more enjoyable.

For any feedback on the Handbook, please email info@elgustoglobal.com



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