

Y'all Come Over

Charming Your Guests with New Recipes,
Heirloom Treasures, and True Southern Hospitality



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Getting Your House Ready

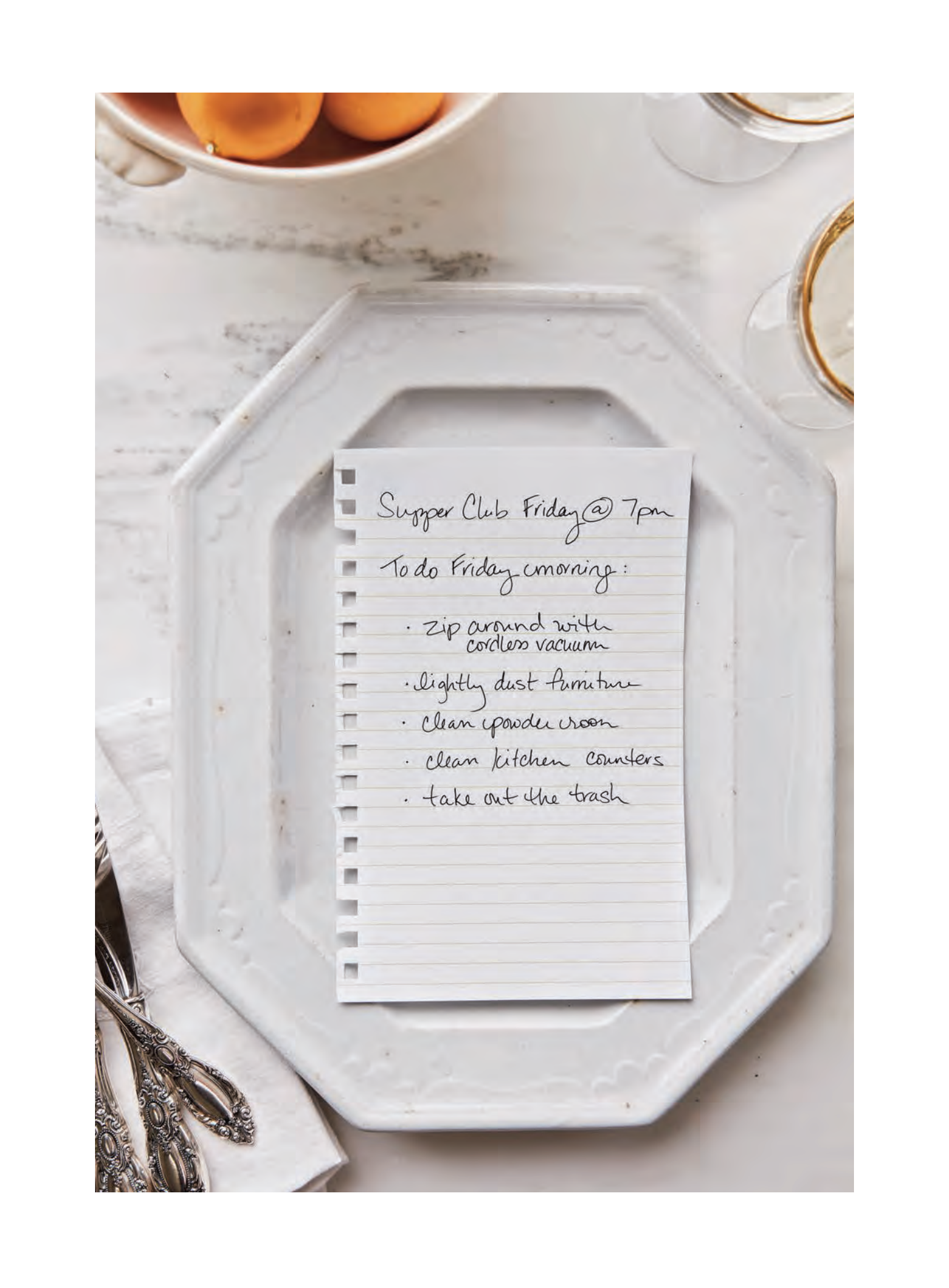
Don't be ashamed, everyone has done it. It's the manic cleaning burst a few hours before friends are coming over to make your house look like no pets, no children, and really no untidy adults have ever lived there. Closets are jammed, beds are stuffed underneath, even the oven may hold things that don't live in the kitchen. There's only so much you can get done in a short time, so I'm giving you a reprieve, mostly.

I have never once attended a party and thought the furniture was dusty. When you're having a great time, you're not looking at such small things. The host always tends to judge their own home much more than anyone else. The key is to clean several days in advance and just touch up the day of the party. On the party day, I zip around with a cordless mini-vacuum in the rooms where the guests will be and use a duster wand on the most visible furniture.

Spend any available time on the two places that should be really clean: the kitchen and the powder room. No one wants to eat from a kitchen that isn't clean. Wipe down the counters before guests arrive and clean as you cook to keep all the dishes from piling up. Take out the trash. Once the party starts, do not wash dishes in front of guests. They'll think they need to help. The powder room is likely the only place guests will be alone and might have a few minutes of quiet. They will notice if it's not clean. The condition of the powder room is a pretty good reflection of the way you keep house.

Especially for large parties, you will want to deep-clean afterward. The more fun your guests have, the less clean your house is when they leave. I save big chores, like mopping, for the day after.

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Supper Club Friday @ 7pm

To do Friday morning:

- Zip around with cordless vacuum
- lightly dust furniture
- Clean powder room
- clean kitchen counters
- take out the trash



Catchall for Coats and Purses

You can easily feel like a bellhop when guests are arriving and shedding coats and bags. We have a coat closet near the front door that I make sure is empty before a party starts. I keep about ten heavy wooden coat hangers there. It's close enough I can hang up a guest's coat right away and let them know where they can find it later. Depending on the size of purses, I may put them in the bottom of the coat closet or on our bed. Many times, guests will find their own spot to stash them. Without a coat closet, a rolling rack in a bedroom for coats to be hung is a great option. These can be purchased at home stores and are useful in many situations. (I keep tablecloths hanging from mine when they're not in use for parties.) Although hanging is the best-case scenario, laying coats and jackets neatly on a bed is also a good solution.

Unfortunately, some hosts will have a designated place to leave your shoes before you enter their home. Unless you are attending a party in a yoga studio or on a yacht with all white decks, you should not be asked to remove your shoes. It makes guests uncomfortable worrying about the condition of their socks or quickly counting back to how long has passed since the last pedicure. Of course, stick to your Southern manners and abide by what the host asks of you with a smile on your face, but make a mental note never to ask that of guests at your house.

If rain is in the forecast, plan for an appropriate spot right outside the front door for wet umbrellas. Umbrella stands, baskets, clean tall planters from the garden, and even vintage coolers will work for this. Put one of your umbrellas in the container before party time so everyone knows right away that's the appropriate storage area.

Seldom, guests arrive with bluebird skies and leave during a frog-strangling rain. Just in case, have several extra umbrellas if a guest needs to borrow one when heading out.

The Perfect Powder Room

The one set-in-stone rule for the powder room is that it has to be spotless. This is the only room in the house that follows this rule. Make sure it's well stocked with extra toilet paper, clean towels, and nicely scented hand soap. Either pump hand soap or pretty bars of soap are fine choices. I always keep a fresh hand towel on the towel rack but especially for parties, I like to leave disposable guest towels out on the counter as well. Look for thick, white paper towels that look very similar to linen.

A little bud vase with a small clipping from your yard or a bloom from the grocery store is perfect next to the sink. It takes only a couple of minutes and adds a personal touch. It's the little things like this that guests really appreciate.

Check in on the powder room a few times during the party. You never know when a little tidying is needed.



Make use of chairs all around the house if you need extra seating during a party. Ottomans and stools can do double duty easily for anyone that needs to sit. If elderly guests are coming over, ensure they get a nice comfortable chair where they can partake and enjoy the party as much as everyone else.

Considerate Parking

Depending on where you live, parking can be a difficulty during entertaining. As the host, it should be your hassle and not your guests' or your neighbors'. Give your neighbors a little notice that more cars will be on your street than usual for the event. If there are certain details about parking that guests need to know, make sure to include them on the invitation. Gated communities usually have a guest code, so pass that on in advance so the entrance doesn't get jammed with cars. If a parking deck is involved, let your guests know what level is most convenient to your home. The more details to make getting to the party easier, the better.

Pets

We own the world's cutest dog. She's sweet, loving, friendly, and abnormally soft. I consider her my third child. All that said, she does not attend all parties in her own house. No matter how much you love your pets, every guest in your home may not feel the same. If Cee needs to vacate, I send her to my parents' house, just a few blocks away, or set her up in the basement with lots of chew toys.

An unattractive aspect of partying where pets live is hair. If your house is like mine, the sofa can easily have plenty of hair that you never see until you stand up and it's all over your black pants. Make sure you run the vacuum or a lint roller over the upholstered furniture before guests arrive. They should leave your home filled with good food and drink, not covered in pet hair.





Kid's Table

Plan for Children

If children are on the guest list, plan for them to have fun too. Seating children at a separate table can make dining a little more relaxed for the adults and be extra fun for the kids. Don't put their table too far away. It's important for children to learn how to behave at the table, so let them sit close enough to the grown-ups to observe.

Set the table similarly, but not as elaborately, as you would set the adult table. Plastic or melamine are great options for the kids' tables. If the children are old enough, let them choose what's on the table and allow them to set it. The more practice, the better!

Big family holidays, like Christmas, Thanksgiving, and Easter, bring out the most need for children's tables. If a child is feeling too old to sit at the kids' table, it's probably time to join the grown-ups. Never, ever seat an adult at the kids' table. You can always find another chair from somewhere to make room for another adult at the dining table.

Keeping Them Busy

Sitting and chatting isn't going to keep the party going for the little people. The table needs activities to hold attention. The easiest way to do this is by laying a large piece of craft paper on the table (as you would a tablecloth) and letting them go to town with crayons. Bowls of stickers are usually a hit as well as pretty containers of Lego pieces (if the children are over 3). If you're eating outside and the sun is setting, add glow sticks to the table for neon fun. When kids are entertained, parents are better at being guests.

For Christmas, look for fun activities, like filling clear, plastic ornaments with fun trinkets for the tree. Craft paper works wonders at Thanksgiving too for children to write down all they are thankful for. Any holiday craft that's easy for little hands and not too messy can work for just about any celebration.

