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PHOTOS ADAM ALBRIGHT AND ANDY LYONS

EASY

summer party

PLAYBOOK

Backyard bashes, grab-and-go picnics, impromptu barbecues—our guide has everything you need for no-stress, no-fail fun.

CHEERS!

'Tis the season to eat, drink, and be merry.

Steel beverage dispenser, \$19.99; target.com. Grace SunnyLife Party Cups, \$3 each; nordstrom.com

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DIY PARTY GLASSES



Dress up drink cups with cute cover-ups. Wrap napkins around glasses, tack with tape, and secure with string.

Pineapples Beverage, \$5 for 24; modernlola.com. Green Chevron Luncheon, \$6 for 20; casparionline.com. Blue & White Dual-Sided Cocktail, \$2.49 for 16; smartyhadaparty.com



SNACK PACKS

Before you head out to the music fest, divvy up your trail mix into small bags to pass and share.

SWEET + SAVORY

Assemble your own trail mix with purchased seasoned nuts. We started with Santé nuts (\$5.49–\$5.99 for 4 oz.; santenuts.com), then added chunks of chocolate, mini marshmallows, and dried fruit for a flavorful twist on s'mores.



Short on tables and chairs for your soiree? Check out party rentals for super cheap seats.

FOLD, PACK, AND GO!

Nothing says “ready to relax” like kicking back in a sling chair with a cool drink in hand. This lightweight number is easy to toss in the back of your car so you always have the best seat at the party.

Bahia Deck Chair, \$150; quelobjet.com

ICE, ICE, BABY!

“Drinks actually cool faster in a bucket of ice that has a fair slush of water in it (not just ice),” says Georgia Frances King, editor of *Kinfolk* magazine. “The secret to keeping it cold is to add a large dose of table salt to the liquid.”



UNBREAKABLE

You'll do a double-take at this assortment of paper and plastic tableware. The latest looks mimic fine china, crystal, linen, and flatware.



DRESSED-UP SETTINGS

1. "Linen" Green Moss Paper Dinner Plates, \$6 for eight; casparionline.com. Michael Aram Lemonwood Luncheon Plates, \$6 for eight; madhousecollection.com. "Linen" Paper Cocktail Napkins in Bright Green and Marine Blue, \$5 for 20; casparionline.com. 2. Poppytalk for Target pink plastic flatware, \$4 for 30; target.com. Gartner Studios Party Plate (pink and gray), \$1.97 for 16; walmart.com. Party "Porcelain" Gold Paper Plate, \$8.25 for 12; talkingtables.com.
3. Octagon Wooden Plate, \$12 for 10; bioandchic.com. Scallop Paper Plate in Aqua, \$7.99 for 10; shoptomkat.com. Gartner Studios Party Napkin, \$1.97 for 24; walmart.com. Peachy Colorblock Flatware, \$12 for 20; shopsweetlulu.com.
4. Poppytalk for Target Cake Stands, \$7 for three; target.com. Oh Joy! for Target Goblet Cup (limited quantities), \$4 for four; target.com.
5. Gartner Studios Party Paper Flowers, \$2.97 for two; walmart.com.
6. Acrylic Diamond Goblets, \$4.95 each; maison-midi.com. Blue Stripe paper tablecloth, \$9; shopmerimeri.com.

BACKYARD BASH

Stock up on a few key pieces and you'll have a grab-and-go arsenal of essentials always at the ready.



PARTY AT MY PLACE MUST-HAVES

1. Pom Pom Throw in Peridot, \$29; [westelm.com](#). Sunbrella El Greco Calypso Outdoor Pillow, \$38 for two; [lowes.com](#).
2. Hand-Painted Food Dome, \$38.97 for three; [worldmarket.com](#).
3. Floating LED Candle, \$5.95; [pier1.com](#). Milano Enamelware, from \$22, and Nantucket Placemats, \$38 for four; [serenaandlily.com](#). Turquoise Flatware Snap Set, \$14.70 for 12; [frenchbull.com](#).
4. Stackable Goblets, \$15.95 for four; [pier1.com](#). Moss Table Runner, \$34; [acmepartybox.com](#).
5. Koziol Scala Turquoise Salad Servers, \$10.65; [touchofeuropa.net](#). Agrarian Stripe Napkins, \$65 for four; [coyuchi.com](#). Better Homes and Gardens® Melamine Dinner Plates, \$2.78 each; Walmart stores. Nate Berkus for Target Sisal Hemp Tray, \$19.99; [target.com](#).
6. Sea Glass String Light, \$19.95; [pier1.com](#).

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Come on over

Jenny Batt of *hankandhunt.com* declares the first Saturday of every summer month an open invite to a backyard barbecue. Her prep is super simple. She premixes batches of lemonade and stocks up on hot links and hot dogs. She also preseasons burgers, stacks them on waxed paper, then freezes. "The idea is to keep things that we can easily store and amp up in case we have a blowout bash," she says.

DIY FOR UNDER A BUCK!

Jenny bowls over her guests by spray-painting old-school wicker chargers and bowls (line with paper plates and parchment to serve food). "It's a fun way to add a pop of color to your outdoor table and not worry about washing dishes," she says.



"I supply the grilled meat, chicken, or fish, and my friends bring some sides. I refuse to be sweating away in a hot kitchen on a nice day."

—Paul Lowe, *Sweet Paul* magazine



BRANCH OUT

These twig-shape cast-iron (hello, reusable!) skewers are super heat conductors.

Charcoal Companion Twig Skewers, \$11.99 for four; *casa.com*

FAST AND FRUITY

Need a signature drink for all your summer gatherings? No problem: Pick up Earth and Vine's Cocktail Mixers (\$12.99 each; *earthvine.com*) to jazz up iced tea or lemonade. Cocktail version: Mix 3 oz. Passion Fruit Pineapple Orange Cocktail Mixer and 1½ oz. coconut-flavored rum. Pour over ice and garnish with a pineapple spear.



FUN ALERT

Get festive with party picks and a fruit garnish.

Tulip Picks, \$9 for 100; *pickonus.com*

WHAT'S FOR BRUNCH?

Fire up the grill in the morning with meats, skillet eggs, and these seared taste treats:

- » French toast kabobs (soak bread cubes in egg mixture)
- » Grilled grapefruit halves sprinkled with cinnamon sugar
- » Bloody Marys with grilled asparagus and olive garnish



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A PLACE IN THE SUN

Lightweight umbrellas = portable shade anywhere.

Beach umbrellas, from \$89.95; sunnylife.com.au



cool down

No one wants to feel the burn at a hot summer party. Keep the rays at bay with extra sun hats, a bucket of ice stocked with sunscreen, and conversation areas with seating strategically placed in the shade.



SWEET SLIDERS

Ice cream sandwiches? Yes, please! In bite-size? Even better! These pieces of goodness are made with pistachio ice cream and toasted coconut between crunchy vanilla wafers.



SMACKDOWN

Expert fly swatters suggest morning assaults (when flies are sluggish); a ventilated swatting pad; and a snappy, quick swat.

Shoo Fly Swatter in faux leather, \$27.95; withluvdesign.com

SUMMER'S BEST SUPER SERVER

Talk about get-it-and-forget-it. Cookbook author Pam Anderson (see her platter-perfect recipes on page 126) serves her party meals buffet-style on an oversize board. Takeout upgrade: Give store-bought chicken a flavor boost with cut citrus and herbs sprinkled on top.

Extra Large Round Pizza Board, \$136; tallulahsstore.com



“Instead of flowers as the centerpiece, fill a big wooden bowl with lemons and limes.”

—Camille Styles, camillestyles.com

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What's your party personality?

Take our free quiz to match recipes with your hosting style. BHG.com/PartyQuiz

THREE CHEERS FOR BEER

Untappd.com lets beer enthusiasts keep track of the brews they drink, save beers to try, and read reviews.

Fish Corkscrew, \$12.50; furbishstudio.com

"I like to add color and comfort to my outdoor seating with folded beach towels for cushions."

—Stephanie Shimp, Blue Plate Restaurant Co., Minneapolis

Better Homes and Gardens beach towels, \$12.88 each; walmart.com

game plan

Self-proclaimed "party girl" Alexandra Hedin keeps energy high and kids occupied at her gatherings with a bucket of biodegradable water balloons, sidewalk chalk, and scavenger hunts. "Summer at our house is a constant rotation of friends and playdates coming over, so I like to have a variety of things on hand," she says. Find more of her party tips at alexandrahedin.com.



NIGHT LIGHTS

No need to play with fire at your party, says entertaining expert Colin Cowie. "Flameless candles are a great worry-free lighting option." Flameless Colored Resin Pillar Candles, \$12.95 each; flipwholesale.com

DIY ALL-SEASON CENTERPIECE

Wire together a 12-inch wire wreath form and a 12-inch floral craft ring. Poke kraft paper-covered wire stems through each 4-inch clay pot and fold over the top edge, then secure at bottom of pot by twisting. Anchor the pots on the wire frame by twisting more floral wire around the wire frame. Alternately angle the pots toward and away from the center of the wreath. Fill the pots with succulents and tuck in moss along the bottom of the wreath. See it made: BHG.com/DIYCenterpiece ■

