

YOU WANT TO KNOW ABOUT

Plan a Star-Worthy Holiday Bash On a Budget

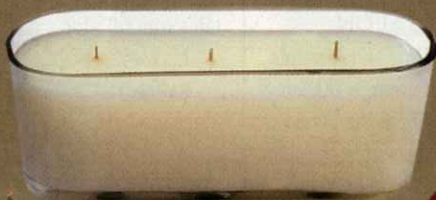
Hollywood party experts tell *Us* how to do more with less

DON'T DITCH THE DECORATIONS

Set the mood "The right lighting makes your party look like it costs more," says Michael Russo, who has planned events for **Beverly Mitchell** and **Lance Bass**. Try amber-tinted bulbs and unscented votive candles (\$14 for 40, *target.com*). Or wrap strands of small, white lights around indoor trees and plants.

Buy in bulk "At Sam's Club, you can buy 50 oversize ornaments for \$33!" Mindy Weiss, who has helped **Heidi Klum** and **Jessica Simpson**, tells *Us*. "Put them all over your house. Group them in clear vases and hang them from chandeliers."

Mix metallics "Silver-and-gold is a trendy color scheme this year," says Weiss. "Metallic instantly makes your decor seem pricier." Take advantage with tinsel, ornaments and even wreaths.



Kelly Rutherford keeps it simple. "We always do a cozy holiday," she tells *Us*.



Klum

FEAST ON FINGER FOOD

Think small Everything is better bite-size, and heavier foods — such as quesadillas and sliders — fill people up faster, says Russo. Make them yourself (get recipes at *epicurious.com*) and spread them around on multiple plates so fewer apps still look like a feast.

Pile on platters Grab meat, veggie and cheese plates at wholesale clubs, then customize them. "Switch the plastic platter for one of yours and add fresh greenery," Russo suggests.

Pick potluck There's nothing wrong with asking close friends to bring a favorite dish to the fete. "It will save you a ton," Russo tells *Us*.



BOTTLE UP THE BOOZE

Forgo the full bar "Offer wine, beer and one signature drink," says Weiss. (See Russo's idea, *below*.)

Or greet each guest with a flute of sparkling wine (Cristalino Brut Cava, \$8, *wine.com*), then switch to budget wine that you've put in decanters, and beer.



Bass

Peppermint Martini SERVES 2

- 5 oz. vodka
- 2 oz. white crème de menthe
- ½ oz. peppermint schnapps
- Mini candy canes



Pour liquid ingredients into a shaker filled with ice. Shake vigorously. Strain into chilled martini glasses. Add a candy cane to each glass for garnish.

SAVE THE ECO WAY

Dial up Save paper and money by ditching the invites *and* e-vites, suggests Weiss. "Go old-fashioned and make phone calls," she says. Bonus: Your guests will feel extra-special.

Pick produce Fruit can be just as festive as pricey baubles. "Place a dozen red apples or green pears in a clear bowl for a chic centerpiece," says Russo. When the last guest leaves, eat up!



MONIQUE MENESES

With reporting by Antonia Blyth, Marisa Carpico, Alisandra Puliti & Aili Riley

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