



## The Too Hot Tamales' Top 10 Tips for Creating a Fabulous Holiday Party



Mary Sue Milliken and Susan Feniger, Food Network's *"Too Hot Tamales"* are Chef/Owners of *Border Grill* Santa Monica, *Border Grill* Las Vegas at Mandalay Bay Resort and Casino, and *Ciudad* in Downtown Los Angeles. Last week we brought you [a report from their fantastic Holiday Cooking Class \(including two amazing recipes\)](#) and now it is our pleasure to share with you their tips for making your holiday gathering a deliciously smashing success.

**1. Impress your guests with a handmade signature cocktail when they walk in the door.**

a. During the holidays, we love to serve blood orange jalapeño margaritas, spiced red sangria, or cucumber mojitos. [\[Recipe for Cucumber Mojitos\]](#)

**2. Anchor a party with a big pot of soup and a big salad then fill it out with appetizers on big platters that you can pass around or just put on a buffet table.**

**3. Get creative with your salads, but keep it simple.**

a. Make a simple vinaigrette.  
b. Choose quality ingredients and play around

with flavor combinations.

**4. Make ahead, make ahead, make ahead!**

a. Sit down and go through your menu and recipes, planning out what can be made a day or two ahead of time, what can be made the morning of the party, and what needs to be made just before or as guests arrive.

**5. Teamwork! Get your significant other to be your sous chef.**

a. We learned from a recent survey that couples who cook together, report feeling more satisfied in every aspect of their lives when compared to couples who do not cook together. These include family life, fun, happiness, relationships, social life, self-image, AND SEX!\*

**6. Gather around in the kitchen.**

a. Encourage guests to gather round, and even pitch in, as you put final touches on the meal.

**7. Make an easy dessert.**

a. Start with the best chocolate, fruit, nuts and don't do much to it.  
b. Cobblers, crisps, parfaits, cookies, and gourmet ice cream with unusual toppings are all great options.

**8. Set the mood with music.**

a. A couple days before the party, sit down at the computer and set-up a cocktail party playlist on iTunes. Even if the music is mellow, an energetic beat is important.

**9. Decorate simply, but create a warm feeling.**

a. Use lots of unscented candles (so the scent doesn't interfere with the food aroma).  
b. Decorate with all of one thing for a simple statement, i.e. All pine cones, or all Gerber daisies, or all mini-Xmas trees.

**10. Have fun! A holiday party is your one time of year to go all out, so . . .**

- a. Accept that you'll need to put extra work into the planning and making ahead stages.
- b. Leave plenty of time for every step and have fun with it instead of feeling rushed.
- c. After dessert, play a game with your guests.
- d. When it's all over, revel in the fact that YOU CREATED A FABULOUS HOLIDAY PARTY!

\*Relationship expert Dr. John Gray, author of "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus: The Classic Guide to Understanding the Opposite Sex", teamed up with Kenmore PRO to conduct a survey of 1,500 couples about cooking together and the impact it has on their lives. The Kenmore PRO "Couples Who Cook" survey was conducted by Impulse Research Corporation in August 2006.

*Photo by Fran Gealer*

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