

Cold weather outdoor entertaining

Outdoor entertaining has never been more popular. As more and more homeowners turn their homes into their own personal oases, extending the party outdoors has become a bigger priority.

According to the American Home Furnishings Alliance's 2015 Outdoor Furniture Trend Report, out-of-doors areas on a property are the favored venues for celebrations with family and friends. While outdoor entertaining was once relegated to the warm weather seasons, advancements in technology have now made it more comfortable and enjoyable to entertain outdoors for much of the year. But hosts who want to extend the outdoor party after summer has come and gone should consider a few important entertaining tips.

• **Start the party early.** Summertime backyard barbecues and pool parties benefit from late-evening sunsets that illuminate patios and pool areas well into the evening. In addition, many hosts

prefer to start such parties later in the day to avoid the sun during the early afternoon when it is at its most blazing. However, start the party earlier in the day when hosting in fall or early winter. Temperatures can drop considerably once the sun begins to set, so starting early can save hosts and their guests from cold air.

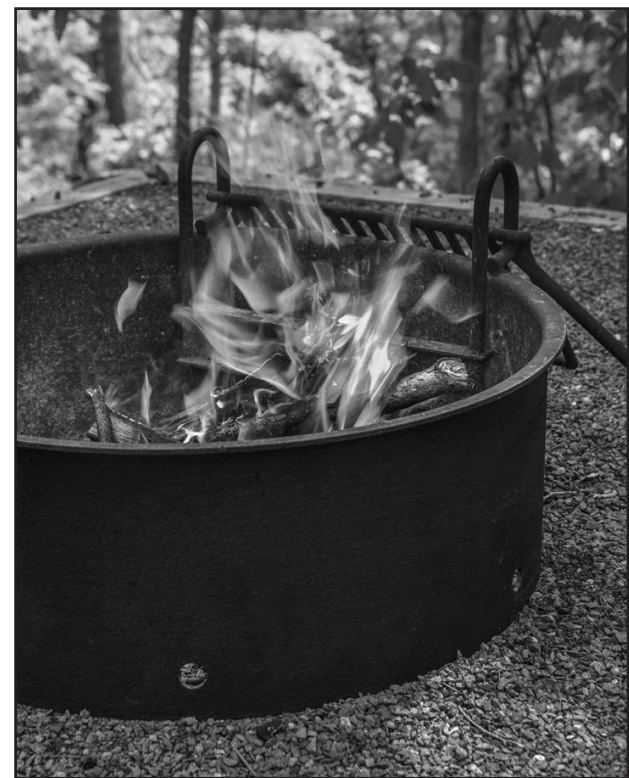
• **Heat things up.** Summertime hosts might employ canopies to protect themselves and their guests from the heat, and it's important for hosts to take similar steps when the weather is chillier. The AHFA report found that 38 percent of homeowners intended to purchase fire pits for their outdoor entertaining areas, and such fire pits can keep guests warm as the sun goes down and the night air gets chilly. Fire pits have become must-have items for outdoor entertaining areas, and hosts can surely find one that suits their needs.

• **Change the menu.** Grilling hot dogs and hamburgers might still

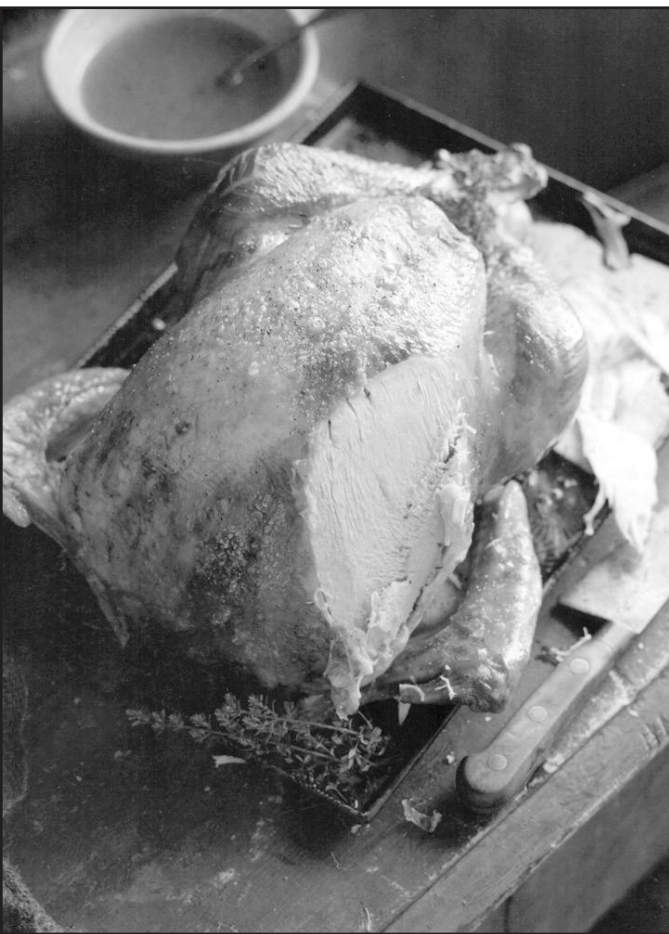
work when entertaining outdoors in fall and winter, but hosts may want to stray from other summertime fare like watermelon or pasta salad. Embrace the cold weather by roasting some nuts and making s'mores over an open fire. In lieu of summertime beverages like lemonade and beer, serve hot chocolate or wine to keep guests warm.

• **Ensure there is adequate lighting.** Mother Nature won't offer much lighting when you host a party outdoors in late fall and early winter, so make sure your patios and sidewalks are well lit. Guests will want to see one another and what they're eating, and well-lit walkways will reduce the risk that guests take a tumble or turn their ankles when walking to and from the house.

Outdoor entertaining need not end because summer has come and gone. But hosts must take a different approach to hosting when throwing outdoor gatherings in late fall and early winter.



Fire pits can keep hosts and their guests warm during outdoor parties in late fall and early winter.



A tasty take on turkey just in time for Thanksgiving

Perhaps no day is more synonymous with a certain dish than Thanksgiving is with turkey. As tasty as turkey can be, this flavorful fowl doesn't find its way onto many families' dinner tables unless it's Thanksgiving day.

Secret family turkey recipes may reign supreme in some

households, but holiday hosts with no such resources can consider this unique recipe for "Holiday Turkey" from Andrew Schloss' "Cooking Slow" (Chronicle Books). By slow cooking the turkey, cooks can ensure it's evenly cooked.



Holiday Turkey - Makes 15 servings

- 1 fresh turkey, about 15 pounds, preferably free-range
- 1 tablespoon olive oil
- 1 quart apple cider
- 2 teaspoons dried poultry seasoning
- Coarse sea salt and freshly ground black pepper



Remove the giblets from the turkey and discard (or save for another use). Rinse the turkey inside and out and pat dry with paper towels. Rub it all over with salt and pepper. Refrigerate, uncovered, for at least 12 hours and up to 24 hours. During that time, the surface of the turkey will become visibly dry and the skin will tighten; this encourages a nice crisp skin on the finished bird.

Remove the turkey from the refrigerator 1 hour before you plan to start roasting. Preheat the oven to 450 F.

Put the turkey on a rack set in a large, flameproof roasting pan. Drizzle the oil over the top.

Roast for 1 hour. Reduce the oven temperature to 175 F. Pour the cider into the roasting pan and sprinkle the poultry seasoning in the liquid. Continue roasting 8 or 9 hours, or until an instant-read thermometer inserted into the thickest part of a thigh (but not touching bone) registers to 170 F.

Transfer the turkey to a carving board, tent loosely with

aluminum foil, and let rest for about 15 minutes (see tip). Meanwhile, skim the fat from the surface of the liquid in the pan. Put the roasting pan over two burners and bring the pan drippings to a boil over high heat. Cook until the juices reduce and thicken slightly, enough to coat a spoon, about 10 minutes. Taste for seasoning. Carve the turkey and serve with cider pan juices.

Resting tip: Slow-roasted meats need far less resting time (pretty much none) than those that are traditionally roasted. The reason for resting meat that has been roasted at a high temperature is to allow juices that have collected in the cooler center time to migrate back into the dryer (hotter) exterior sections after it comes out of the oven. Because slow-roasted meats are cooked evenly and a temperature that keeps most of the juices in place, a resting period is largely unnecessary. A brief resting time does allow the meat to become a little firmer as it cools, making it easier to carve.