

# Valentine Dinner Party Ideas, Part 1



## The centerpiece

Most of our entertaining is rather casual, but once a year we try to have a formal event that requires a bit more planning. Since the pandemic hit, almost all entertaining here is done outside in the fresh air with a small number of people. Today, I want to share the Valentine Dinner party we had on Saturday night. This post is long, so I am breaking up into two parts. Enjoy Part 1 today; I will continue Part 2 tomorrow. Hopefully you will glean some tips and ideas for when you host your next dinner party.

## The Guest List



Even though we would like to extend invitations to a larger group of friends, we know that big gatherings are not smart right now. Since we are having the dinner outside, we reduce the number of guests to 8 (even though the table can comfortably seat 10 or 12). This allows us the chance to spread out a bit and be respectful of social distancing. A few weeks before we send a Save the Date email to make sure our guests are available to attend.

## The Invitation



A few blog posts ago, I shared my homemade Valentine note card using watercolor pencils. If you missed this post, click [here](#). The invitation is printed using my computer/printer on pink card stock (found at Michaels). The edges are decoratively cut

using [\*Fiskars decorative scissors\*](#), hole punched, affixed with ribbons and placed inside the decorative notecards. Date, time, and location are expressed for this event, as well as attire.



We hand-deliver invitations to the guests along with a box of homemade Linzer heart-shaped cookies with jam filling (recipe [here](#) from King Arthur).



Linzer cookies with raspberry jam



Delivering the invitations

## Determining the Menu



The Menu

This is one of the few events where I hire a caterer to do the cooking, serving and cleaning. This gives me a chance to really engage with our guests. The accomplished Julie Greder always caters our events and knows what to do... and with excellence! Beforehand, I do ask each of the guests if they have a food dislike or allergy and design the menu accordingly.



The dinner will be plated and served, but first Julie and I discuss our options on appetizers. She suggests we individually create plates as a precaution.



Wines from Total Wine

Next, my husband and I determine the wines that will be paired

with each course. Lots of time and research go into selecting the proper vintage and varietal.



Menus are printed on pink card stock, decorative edges cut. A pretty satin ribbon graces the top.

## The Preparation



My husband assembling outdoor heaters

From designing the table/color theme to extensive yard work, my husband and I spend many hours the week prior to the event making sure everything is in tip-top shape. We plant new flowers, rake the leaves, mow the lawn, wash the windows. In the above photo, I hang heart-shaped garland (both purchased and homemade) over the table from small, clear Command hooks on the ceiling.



A few days before the event, we assess the weather, sun patterns. What will the temperature be? Do we need outdoor heaters? Will we need to provide shawls or blankets? What time is sunset? Will there be enough light?

We also walk the house to determine entrances and exits. Do I need more candles? More ambiance? Where will flowers go? What bathroom will be accessible?



Entertaining is a favorite on the front porch

Where will we serve cocktails? What path will our guests take to get from the front porch to the back terrace? How will it all be illuminated?

# Gifts for Guests



Bracelets by Tanya Lochridge

For this event, we select a gift for each guest that will remind them of this evening. For each woman I choose a piece of jewelry. My dear friend and talented jewelry maker, Tanya Lochridge, sends bracelets that are similar but different: friendship bracelets we can all wear. You can visit her website [here](#).



Wine glasses from Amazon

The men get novelty wine glasses with a funny inscription (source [here](#)). Utilizing pink card stock, I make a heart shape, punch a hole, add the guest name and tie the name card to the gift bag. Pretty pink-themed wrapped gifts serve as place cards which is helpful in seating arrangements.



Pink bag, tissue and ribbon from Target

## The Homework



5 questions to our guests

Prior to the event, the guests are sent a list of 5 questions to answer. We try to inquire about things that are unknown. Once I compile the answers, I create a game during the cocktail hour where each guests needs to find out whose answer is whose. More on that tomorrow.

That's a wrap on Part 1 of planning our formal Valentine dinner party. Tomorrow we will cover the table, flowers, place

setting, my outfit and the details of the actual event.

Happy Tuesday! I hope you enjoyed the holiday weekend and a Monday off.

*Mary*



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