

TULSA WORLD

Be a grateful guest

by: KIM BROWN World Scene Writer
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Summer entertaining is all about casual.

Cookouts, get-togethers and dinner parties often consist of burgers, salads and grilled meats - but showing gratitude to your host is often a forgotten ingredient.

That's why host/hostess gifts are a nice way to show your friends or family that you appreciate their time.

"People are certainly more casual these days. I think people really enjoy the casualness in entertaining," said Tulsa etiquette expert Rachel Wagner. "The hostess enjoys mingling more instead of serving food on trays."

And because the gatherings are more casual, Wagner suggests the gifts be thoughtful rather than extravagant.

"In my circle of friends, people will take hostess gifts," she said. "A small package of monogrammed beverage napkins is wonderful. And recently, I gave someone a jar of hummus with a monogrammed spreader."

As people have transformed into foodies through the years, choosing that requisite bottle of wine has become a bit more difficult, Wagner said.

"I think for small dinner party you have to know a couple intimately enough to know what tastes are," she said. "But if someone is a wine drinker and you don't know their tastes, you can give them a pretty wine coaster."

Or, when all else fails, go for something sweet.

"You can never go wrong with a small box of decadent, dark chocolates," she said.

Just remember that the host/hostess should not feel obligated to break out your gift right away.

"It's just a nice gesture," Wagner said.

Guy's stuff

Being a grateful guest also goes for the guys.

So the next time your buddy invites you to try out his new grill, bring something he'll enjoy. No gift wrapping necessary.

Here are some ideas:

- A six-pack of his favorite beer or soda (\$7)

- Grilling seasonings from the grocery store (\$2.50 to \$3 per bottle)
- A bag of shell-on peanuts (less than \$5)
- Bottle of gourmet barbecue sauce or salsa (\$5 to \$10)
- Spicy wasabi snack mix (about \$4)

Rachel Wagner is a certified corporate etiquette and international protocol consultant and founder of the business etiquette firm, Rachel Wagner Etiquette and Protocol. She trains leadership teams on the topics of business and dining etiquette to polish their professional presence and the image of their company. Rachel is active with the American Society for Training and Development and the National Speaker's Association. She is author of a popular e-zine, The Savvy Professional, and is frequently quoted in the media. She can be reached by phone at 918.970.4400 or by email at Rachel@EtiquetteTrainer.com. Website: www.EtiquetteTrainer.com.

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