

Minor inconvenience

Are kids welcome at a holiday cocktail party? Not so much. Never assume.

You've agreed on a date, guest list, menu, and cleaning schedule for both before and after the party. You've convinced your husband that he will receive a year's worth of kudos for his marinating technique and grilling upgrades. But why oh why did you get sucked into inviting children to your adult soirée?

It all started innocently enough after the first enthusiastic RSVPer said, "We're assuming the kids are invited?" I thought we all knew we should never assume. So cancel the weekend kid visit at Grandma and Grandpa's. If other kids are coming then the three squatters who live here need to be present to hide their favourite toys so no one else can touch them.

Bringing your child to a friend or neighbour's holiday party is a little like "bring your child to work day." It's really cute during the morning coffee routine but becomes a stretch after, "Here's where we keep the recycling bins. Help yourself to another doughnut."

Now party prep takes on another level – the basement. This requires turning a somewhat obscure, potentially dangerous, mostly off-limits area with at least one power tool into Party Room B for those 12 and under. You look for balloons and leftover birthday decorations and consider some sort of craft to keep them busy. This is not at all what you had in mind when dreaming of your elegant cocktail party. What if the kids get at the profiteroles? What



do we do with the one 13-year-old? Should we fashion some sort of multi-level pass?

You notice the bug carcass collection in the banks of the window sills and wonder firstly why the bugs have all agreed to die in those particular pockets of the house simultaneously and secondly, is anyone EVER going to look there?

Your husband looks to you for assignments while you prepare the house for your two sets of guests. When there is no delegated task, you may find him in the mudroom organizing bottles of barbecue sauce into pyramids or putting batteries in all of the flashlights.

Here are some of my surefire ways to make the evening a success.

DO review the bottles of wine presented to you at the door and immediately open the bad ones. This is a great host trick and a simple way to add to your personal stock by hoarding those collectibles you know you will enjoy at a later date. Maybe when the kids are at Grandma and Grandpa's for that re-scheduled weekend and all the barbecue sauce is in perfect alignment.

DON'T begin a tour of the house with the arrival of each guest. They've almost all seen a bathroom before. Offer to show people around when at least three quarters of the guests have arrived.

DO use the children as coat checkers and napkin and wine glass charm servers. They'll learn a valuable lesson in why giving is better than receiving when you find one of them buried under the stack of heavy, leather jackets.

DO accept the plastic, snowflake tray of thumbprint cookies with grace. They will add colour and texture to the basement party room and a hint of whimsy to the leftover Halloween tablecloth.

DO use the kids to break the ice. The young crowd will be the first to turn on the karaoke machine and when the adults are full of homemade raspberry wine, they, too, will join in the fun.

DON'T use your multi-age party as an opportunity to showcase your child's piano skills. There is only one person smiling in this scenario and that's you. The child is embarrassed and your guests are irritated because their children aren't invited to share their special talents.

DON'T get upset if everyone raves about your husband's mini-flank-steak sandwiches and how bright all of the flashlights appear. They all know you were the mastermind, the menu planner, the bug coroner, and as a mother, you're used to the lack of thanks. Remember there's a partial tray of thumbprint cookies and a cellar full of "the good stuff" to help you survive the holidays. 🍷

Liz Hastings is a stay-at-home mom of Hanna, 8, Ellie, 5, Chloe, 2, (aka the squatters) and a frequent contributor to ParentsCanada. When she's not wrestling tights onto one of her girls, she's disguising the workshop as the kid's party room.



Can you relate to Liz's story? Tell us about it at ParentsCanada.com/feedback. Or submit your own Because I Said So story to janiceb@parentscanada.com.