



7 Tips for Gathering the People You Love Around the Table *with a minimum of stress*

adapted from *Bread & Wine* by Shauna Niequist (Zondervan)

1. Remember that people are craving presence, not perfection. “Decide that every time you open your door it’s an act of love, not performance or competition,” Shauna says.
2. Not a cook? Start where you are. Order pizza and serve it with a green salad. Focus on making people comfortable in your home.
3. Reading is a great place to begin if you want to learn to cook (Shauna recommends Mark Bittman’s *How to Cook Everything*), but there is no substitute for hands, knife, pan. Jump right in, start small with simple dishes.
4. Make it easier to pull together weeknight dinners—often more difficult than cooking for a party, because of time constraints, end of work day exhaustion, and hungry kids. Try to have some basics on hand, and a few go-to dishes that are easy to throw together. Shauna suggests big salads, soup, rice bowls, and tacos.
5. Invite people into your home. Don’t worry about your messy table or the kids’ toys or a basket of dirty laundry in plain sight. “People are not longing to be impressed, they’re longing to feel at home,” Shauna says.
6. For entertaining, be prepared and make a detailed plan. Shauna says what allows her to be a happy, relaxed host is planning. “It doesn’t mean you won’t forget anything, it means you’ll have to time to fix whatever you’ve forgotten.”
7. Accept help. Let your kids and/or spouse help with weeknight meals, and let people bring things, help you cook, or help clean up for parties. Remember, it’s not a performance.

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