

Good-times guide

Making happy memories together!

Host a Bloody Mary brunch!

Bloody Mary bars are making a splash at trendy brunch spots across the country, and they're the perfect way to entertain on a lazy Saturday or Sunday morning!

To-Do List

The night before:

- ❑ Gather all ingredients
- ❑ Make fresh ice
- ❑ Set out pitchers, ice bucket and napkins

The day of:

- ❑ Make egg and potato dishes
- ❑ Mix up base mix
- ❑ Set out toppings

1 Mix up the perfect crowd!

"A Bloody Mary brunch works for small or large groups because the prep is so fuss-free," says Divya Gugnani, author of the upcoming book *Sexy Women Eat*. "Invite three to ten guests and eat in the kitchen or living room—no need for place settings. If guests are eating on a sofa or in armchairs, offer them large cloth napkins."

2 Start with party-perfect ice!

"Ice is porous and will pick up the smells and flavors of whatever's in your freezer, so make a few fresh trays the night before," says Gugnani. "If you have a few extra minutes, boil the water for five minutes before freezing. The result is clear, glassy ice!" (Stack ice in a bucket just before guests arrive.)

3 Make your "base" drink!

"An hour or two before brunch, make one pitcher of classic spicy Bloody Marys for every six people and chill. When guests start to trickle in, set out extra cans of plain tomato juice, hot sauce and horseradish so everyone can mix up their own versions." Here's a base mix to try:

Spicy Bloody Mary Mix

Makes 12 5-oz. glasses.

1. Combine 1 (46-oz.) bottle tomato juice, 3 Tbs. freshly squeezed lime juice, 1 tsp. Worcestershire sauce, 3 tsp. horseradish, 1 tsp. Tabasco sauce and 1 tsp. celery salt. Blend until smooth. Chill at least 1 hour.

2. Before serving, add 1 1/2 cups vodka; mix well to combine. Fill glasses with ice, then fill to the top with Bloody Mary mix. Garnish with a celery stalk and a green olive.

4 Set out toppings!

"The really fun part is offering toppings like they do at fancy 'MYOBM'—mix your own Bloody Mary—bars," says Gugnani. "The only extras you need are celery stalks, trimmed so they fit neatly in the glasses you're using, but try to have at least five or six others with some bamboo skewers for spearing." Try these:

- Hunks of feta cheese (or fresh mozzarella)
- Pickled green beans
- Cucumber spears
- Cherry tomatoes
- Stuffed olives
- Fried bacon
- Citrus wedges

Want even more options?

Try vodkas flavored with chili peppers or citrus, a tube of wasabi and jars of clams or olives—the "juice" is a delicious addition!

Experiment with these trendy "Marys"!

❖ **The Bloody Orange Mary**
You'll need bottled or fresh blood orange juice for these, says Gugnani. "Mix it half and half with tomato juice, then make your Marys as usual, skipping the horseradish, which can overpower the delicate orange flavor." (Blood orange juice, sometimes called "volcano juice," is available at Whole Foods stores and DreamFoods.com.)

❖ **The Carrot Mary**
Substitute bottled or fresh carrot juice for the tomato—or buy a special carrot marinade and add vodka and fresh lime juice. One to try: Carrot Marinade Sauce, \$5.95 at ChefPascal.com.

❖ **The Reverse Mary**
Freeze Bloody Mary mix (without vodka) and serve the cubes in a vodka tonic!

Find more recipes at BehindTheBurner.com.

Photos: Media Bakery (3); Bender/Stockfood Munich/Stockfood America; Newedel/Stockfood Munich/Stockfood America; Dana Hoff/Stockfood.

—Katie Alberts



5 Serve savory brunch favorites!

"Since Bloody Marys feature a lot of spice and acid, you want to offset them with foods that are creamy, fluffy and starchy," says Gugnani. "Whip up frittatas made with any veggies you have in your fridge, home fries, hash browns or a cheesy egg dish."

