or moleskin, or at least spritz for a casual T-shirt.

-Caribbean Cruise: If winter’s bringing you down, you could always turn your apartment into a cruise ship. Pick up some coconuts and pineapple from the grocery store, and cheap Hawaiian accessories to set the mood in the apartment. Encourage your friends to wear bathing suits or tacky Hawaiian shirts.

-Midnight Breakfast: A traditional New Year’s party theme, midnight breakfast can work any time of the year. Serve coffee and Baileys, champagne, and spilled orange juice, and get your guests to help out with making pancakes or waffles.

Invitations

Based on how much space you’ve got, you’ll have to decide how many people you can reasonably invite. A tiny apartment will probably only fit 10 or 20 people at most, while a large house with a backyard could have space for 100 or more. Once you’ve figured out how many people you’re going to invite, you need to actually come up with your guest list. If it’s a big party, you can probably get away with inviting people who may not necessarily get along, but in a small, more intimate gathering, you’ll probably want to avoid inviting more enemies or different friend groups in the same party.

With all that done, it’s time to get the word out about your party. You have a few options. If it’s a smaller event, you should invite every single person, whether through text message, a phone call, or an actual paper invitation. For a bigger gathering where individually contacting each person would be too time-consuming, Facebook is now obviously the go-to method.

However you decide to notify your invitations, you’ll want to include some basic information. Guests will need to know your address and what time to arrive. It’s worth noting that the timing of your party is important — unless you’re planning on serving a full meal, it’s best to start the party after most people have already eaten, around 8 p.m., while the really good tidbits don’t normally start until after 10 p.m. Naturally, also inform guests of a theme or dress code.

They’ll also need to know what sort of food and beverages will be provided, and what they should bring themselves. If it’s BYOB, or a potluck, make sure guests know that they’re responsible for providing their own alcohol or a dish to share.

Party prep

Your place doesn’t need to be completely spotless before the party, but you don’t want drunken guests stumbling over the dirty laundry you left on your living room floor. Do the dishes, clean anything and everything out of your refrigerator, and make room for party snacks and drinks. Tidy up the bathroom, and stash anything you don’t want seen out of the way. It’s good to have an area off limits to guests so you can rearrange any mess out of sight. If you don’t own all your guests very well, put anything valuable — cash, small electronics, the ring from your mother’s first marriage — safe where they’re less likely to disappear.

A quick trip to the corner store is a good plan before any party. For most occasions, you should provide some basic snack foods: chips and dip, a veggie tray, crackers, and other munchables will generally go over well. You’ll also want to get some sturdy paper plates and napkins, and possibly some plastic cups. It’ll make clean-up much easier at the end of the night if you don’t have a huge stack of dishes to wash — but make sure you recycle those cups. While you’re at it, pick up some pop and juice to use as mixers and serve to anyone who’s acting as a designated driver.

If you have a group of regular friends, you might consider getting everyone to pitch in for a large. But even if your party is BYOB, you should pick up a large case of your favourite beer or cool- er. I’ll give you something to drink during the evening, and keep the party from ending too early should guests start to run dry.

At the party

Setting the mood is integral to the success or failure of your soirée. If the atmosphere isn’t conducive to having a classy time, your guests and business associates will run for the door. When choosing which atmosphere to create, revert back to your decision about what type of party you’re throwing. A gathering with family? Don’t invite anyone prone to taking his or her clothes off — paid or otherwise. A huge party with your best friends? Make sure to hide all those Maxim covers in the attic.

In addition to choices in music and invited company, it’s important to keep the party lively and provide plenty of chances for your guests to loosen up. This isn’t grade school, so don’t pull out the hula hoop or prepare your heavenly cash for canoeing. Find a pole — just that kind of pole — because everybody loves limbo contests.

If you want to get to know your guests a little better, start a light conversation about something you have in common. Sparking up a chat about the future of America after the inevitable nuclear holocaust is a bit of a downer — why not start out with a joke to break the ice or offer your friends a complement along with a refreshing Lucky Strike cigarette. Most of all, just be yourself, have fun, and don’t get too sloppily drunk, especially if it’s your party. Everyone will appreciate your relaxed attitude and warm tones, you might even meet a new buddy or two.

Aftermath

You might have consumed a couple bourbon over the night, but it’s important that you have a cool demeanor as your party starts to wind down. Much like the 1958 NFL Championship Game, a party is won or lost in the waiting moments of the night.

As the evening winds down, people start to head out, make sure that nobody is going to be driving home drunk. You may need to call a taxi, or two or provide space for some drunken friends to crash if they can’t make their own way home safely. This is where your preparations come into play.

Cleaning up the next morning can be a real drag, but unless you want your place to remain dirtier than a mongoose politics put in a little capital elbow grease into it and make your place sparkle. The paper plates and plastic cups can go straight into the recycling and empties taken to the depot adds a much-needed capital injection to the new party fund. A little Ajax for your carpet couldn’t hurt either, along with a once-over with a vacuum. Ajax is stronger than dirt, more gentle than a Russian gulag!