HOSTING GUIDE

Make Ahead & *Hosting Plan*

SERVES	MENU
8	7 recipes

Everything I do before book club, in the order I actually do it. None of it is hard. It is just staged, so that by the time the doorbell rings you are pouring drinks instead of standing at the stove.

THE DAY BEFORE

- Make the fig butter for the crostini. It keeps up to a week in the fridge.
- Batch the French Blondes and refrigerate.
- Set the table. Candles, napkins, the whole thing. Put the book somewhere people will see it.
- Make the garlic croutons for the salad.
- Crisp up the lardons and make the vinaigrette for the salad. Store them separately.
- Make the whipped truffle and parmesan mashed potatoes, cool completely, cover tightly and store in the fridge overnight.

THE MORNING OF

- Mise en Place (pre-chop) all of the veggies for the Coq au Vin: the carrots, shallot, garlic, and mushrooms. Refrigerate until ready to cook.
- Clean your frisée and butter lettuce. I place them in a large bowl lined with paper towels and cover with a kitchen towel to stay fresh.
- Make and bake the apple galette. It is just as good at room temperature, and better than you scrambling at dessert.
- Slice the baguette for the Brie and Fig Crostini into 24 rounds, place on a sheet pan and keep them covered with a kitchen towel.
- Cut the brioche bread for the Ham and Cheese Tartines, place on a sheet pan and keep them covered with a kitchen towel.
- Chill the coupes/cocktail glassware in the freezer.

2 HOURS BEFORE

- Remove the potatoes from the fridge to come to room temperature.
- Pull the fig butter out to soften at room temperature.
- Start the Coq au Vin. I cook and bake completely. If it's done a little early, just crank down the oven to 200°F to keep warm until ready to serve.
- While it bakes, slice the Brie into 24 squares and thinly slice the figs.

1 HOUR BEFORE

- Put the potatoes in the oven to reheat/warm.
- Pour yourself one. Seriously, this is part of the plan.

30 MINUTES BEFORE

- Pull the coq au vin out and let it rest. It holds beautifully and only gets better sitting there.
- Spread the fig butter over the baguette rounds and bake until golden at the edges, 6 to 8 minutes. Set aside.
- Light the candles. Start the music.

WHEN GUESTS ARRIVE

- Pour the French Blondes.
- Finish the crostini: top each one with Brie and a slice of fig, back into the oven for 3 to 4 minutes, then scatter the thyme and serve warm.
- Cook and assemble the Ham and Cheese Tartines.
- Warm the lardons and the dressing.
- Dress the frisée right before everyone sits down. Not one minute sooner.

AT THE TABLE

- Coq au vin spooned over the whipped potatoes, salad alongside, braiser right on the table.
- Galette for dessert, already done, already cooling on the counter.
- Spoiler-free discussion questions are in the newsletter if you want somewhere to start.

A FEW HOSTING NOTES

- A word on the oven. I have a double oven, which makes this menu easy. If you are working with one, just know that the coq au vin has to come out so the crostini/tartines can go in. Pull it, tent it loosely with foil, and let it rest on the stove. Once the crostini come out, slide the coq au vin back in at 200°F to stay warm until you serve. It only gets better sitting there.
- Ask your friends to help with the last 30 minutes of “service”. I always have the salad ready to be tossed and assign someone that job. Ask someone else to refresh anyone's drinks or open the wine bottles.
- Nobody remembers the host who made perfect drinks one at a time. They remember the one who sat down.
- Let the braiser go straight to the table. It is the prettiest thing you will make all month.