

Touchdown Party



A great way to bring family and friends together during football season is to throw a football game-watching party. Get everyone involved by having the kids help with the decorations to create an event everyone will enjoy.

Send the Invites

Of course your invite should include all the essentials: place, date, time, etc., but make sure you also include any other important information (such as directions and whether it's a potluck) people might need. Another helpful tip: If someone said they would bring a dessert or an extra tablecloth, write that down on the inside of their invitation so your guest can put the helpful reminder on the fridge.

Feeling creative? Skip the traditional invitation and make it a family affair! With some scissors, construction paper and markers, you can make football-shaped invitations and your kids will have fun helping.

Using a brown piece of construction paper, fold it in half, cut out a football shape, making sure to leave some of the fold connected so it doesn't fall apart. Draw the football stitches on the front of the invitation with a black or orange marker (if the orange marker will show up on the brown paper) and let the kids fill out the inside.

If your kids are still too little to fill out invitations, give them a special place to "sign" on the inside or back of the invite. This lets even your little ones participate while making your invitation extra-special for your guests.

For important information or reminders, write them on the inside of the invite or on a separate piece of paper that you fold and put in the envelope with the invitation. The best part of making homemade invitations is that you get to bond with your family while sticking to your budget.

Of course if you're really pressed for time or funds, you can send email invites instead. Some free websites even let you decorate them with a football theme.

Party Decorations

This is the fun part of party planning. Of course you'll want to decorate your living room or basement with any football fan items you already have, but you can also add to the party without breaking your budget with some well-planned, homemade decorations as well as fun, colorful party additions that you can use year-round.

Some budget-friendly decoration supplies include:

- Streamers in your team colors
- Bowls in your team colors
- Candles in — you guessed it — your team colors
- An extra air freshener or two (not a decoration, but still important!)

You can twist the colored streamers together and hang them from your ceiling. If you have a ceiling fan in the middle of the room this will be really easy, but you can still do it even if you don't have one — just use tape or special putty-tape to make sure you don't take any paint off of your walls or ceiling.

You can also add color and team spirit to your party by hanging streamers from:

- The backs of chairs
- The sides of the coffee table or kitchen table
- The tops of lamps (make sure the lamps are secure and won't topple over)
- Around the television screen
- Around banisters or stair railings

Team colors are fun for everyday use, so don't hesitate to pick up bowls or other kitchen or serving accessories in your team colors. You can use them for the entire football season — and even during the off-season too! Make your home a little more festive by getting everyday home items like throw pillows in your team colors as well.

If you have little ones, you can still leave the candles out, just make sure you don't light them when the kids are running and playing during the game.

Food for Your Party

Some of the best party foods are also great for your budget. Making a meal in bulk and saving the leftovers can stretch one meal into two or even three for your family! Here are some meal ideas that will keep your budget, and your guests, happy:

- Sloppy Joes
- Pulled pork sandwiches
- Barbecue chicken sandwiches

Chili Snacks are always great and fit in before, during and after dinner. In order to be budget-friendly, buy in bulk and save. Larger packages and bags of snacks are usually a better deal. Stock up and save, but make sure to pick up a "chip clip" or two to seal in freshness, just in case your guests don't finish everything. Snack bags that just get rolled up and stuffed into a cabinet or placed on a shelf can unwrap and get stale.

- Potato chips
- Pretzels
- Cheese and crackers
- Cheez-Its
- Tortilla chips and salsa
- Packages that have multiple kinds of individual chip bags in them. (These packages are especially great for picky eaters in your house!)
- Celery (the perfect complement to hot wings)

Dips and salsa for your chips Snacks are great but you might want to include heartier fare as well. Other party foods to have on hand include:

- Wings (Buffalo wings, barbecue wings or hot wings)
- Fried chicken
- Hamburgers, hot dogs or grilled chicken (for that fresh-from-the-grill taste late in the season, try an indoor grill option)

If you're making wings or serving cut vegetables, make sure to pick up extra blue cheese dressing, ranch dressing or sour cream and ranch dip packages so your guests have something to dip their chips or veggies in.

When the Guests Arrive

When your guests arrive, you could either hand them a plate and point them to the buffet table or you could get them in the spirit with a game-related contest. Here are a couple of ideas to get you started:

High Score: Put the numbers of your team players on scraps of paper. When your guests arrive, have them pick a number from a bowl. When their player scores a touchdown, a field goal or intercepts a pass, the person holding that player's number gets a prize. The prize can be something super simple and fun like handmade awards (have the kids help out) or even a bag of pretzels — it's the bragging rights and celebration that matter most.

Clean Team: Start by having your guests guess who will win the game and by how many points. Whoever is farthest away from the right answer helps with trash and dish-duty at the end of the night. This way you have the largest number of winners, and you get help cleaning up after the party is over.

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