



Saddle Up, Buttercup: Your Ultimate Kentucky Derby Party Checklist

(Because greatness starts with good snacks and bigger hats.)



Invitations

- Send invites 3–4 weeks early
 - Specify "Big Hats Required, No Excuses"
 - Mention start time at least an hour before the actual race (people are slow, bless their hearts)
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Dress Code

- Hats so large they need their own zip code
 - Bow ties, suspenders, and pastel madness
 - Prizes for Best Hat, Worst Hat, and Most Likely to Take Flight
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Drinks (Mint Juleps Are Non-Negotiable)

- Mint Julep Bar Setup: mint, bourbon, crushed ice, simple syrup
 - Add bonus cocktails like Kentucky Mules and Spiked Sweet Tea
 - Mocktail station for kids, drivers, and those who *"only drink socially"*
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Food (Make It Southern, Make It Sassy)

- Mini Hot Browns
 - Pimento Cheese Dip *and* sandwiches (double trouble)
 - Bourbon Meatballs (the real MVPs)
 - Fried Chicken Sliders (because fried chicken is love)
 - Derby Pie Bars (tiny but mighty)
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Betting Pool (Fake Money, Real Glory)

- Horse list printed and ready
 - Betting slips or raffle tickets prepped
 - Prizes for Winners, Losers, and "Best Horse Name Selector"
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Decor (Garden Party Meets Horse Race)

- Red roses (real or fake, we're not judging)
 - Horseshoes, trophies, and plastic ponies for flair
 - Gingham or pastel tablecloths
 - Selfie station with stick horses, feather boas, and giant sunglasses
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Race Viewing Setup

- TV tested and working (no excuses!)
- Seats arranged with clear sightlines

- Backup stream ready to go (tech drama = party foul)
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Awards & Toasts

- Trophies or silly prizes ready
 - Champagne (or sparkling apple juice for the classy crowd)
 - End-of-party group photo (capture the chaos)
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Bonus "Bless Your Heart" Extras

- Hat-decorating station (for the creatively challenged)
- Lawn games like horseshoes or cornhole
- A playlist of country tunes and Southern rock to keep the vibe alive