



FRIENDSGIVING:

26 Ideas for a More Connected Thanksgiving

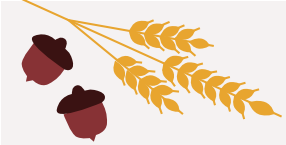
Friendsgiving: It's that Thanksgiving dinner where your friends pile into your house like family, and maybe right alongside them.

The secret to a truly successful Friendsgiving? Rather than play "hero host" to impress your guests, invite everyone to collaborate and shift your goal toward relaxed connection and gratitude.

Grab a few ideas to host your own Friendsgiving ... aside from just pulling up a few folding chairs. Who knows what happiness you'll create?

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1. Invite someone lonely, shut in, or simply not traveling for the holiday to your Friendsgiving dinner.
2. Invite each family unit to contribute one or two dishes (store-bought versions welcome!) for a Friendsgiving potluck. If someone doesn't cook, ask for a bagged salad, salad dressing, veggie tray, or apple cider. The more you delegate, the more you increase your own joy as host!
3. Pray about the "wild card" God might have for your meal: one person, couple, or family He leads you to include (check out Luke 14:13 for inspiration!). Invite your spouse and kids to help you think this through.
4. Consider using compostable plates and utensils so you spend less time on dishes and more time enjoying your guests. If "real" dishes are a must, invite others to help clean up. Washing up can be an opportunity for connection and laughter, too.
5. Invite an international family or student to your meal, or a local college student who can't go home.
6. Connect with your local food pantry to see if they need help delivering Thanksgiving meals in the morning. Invite friends to join you.



7. In the vein of reaching out to those without a place to go, call a nursing home to find out which resident(s) won't be seeing family for Thanksgiving, and schedule a visit.
8. Share your Thanksgiving bounty even with those who can't make it. Leave portions of pie or rolls—or a takeaway version of the meal—on a friend's porch with one of the gift tags below this list. Kids might enjoy delivery duty!
9. Send a handwritten card to someone who will feel a loss or absence at their table this year. Let them know you're praying for them.
10. If you enjoy a craft, consider something to gift your neighbors to increase their holiday happiness: rolled beeswax candles, multicolored corn tied into a centerpiece, a basket of pinecones or mini gourds spray-painted gold. Get creative! Use our gift tags below.
11. Use rolls of brown paper for your tablecloth. Lay out markers and write "I am thankful for..." in the middle. Ask your friends to write what they're grateful for this year.
12. In the weeks leading up to your Friendsgiving, make a goal to send out a certain number of thank-you notes—particularly to people who might not know how much you appreciate them. Help your kids do the same!
13. Set aside a few activities for meal prep that are easy for younger guests to help with: pressing pie crust in a pan, arranging a veggie tray, whisking gravy.
14. We get it: Friendsgiving may not mean everyone you long to be there can attend. Help kids record a video "greeting card" for friends or relatives far away, describing their appreciation for that person's influence in their lives. (Let 'em get creative with the props: Should a Lego mini-figure or doll deliver the message?) Or roll out the butcher paper to design a banner you'll send in the mail for a special surprise.
15. Friendsgiving is all about extending gratitude, connection, and warmth—even to strangers. Bring a toasty beverage to someone working outside this time of year, like construction workers or landscapers—or your own family members raking leaves. Thank them for their work.
16. Create a kids' activity table for Friendsgiving. Set out printed activities, the gratitude BINGO from [FamilyLife's Gratitude Project](#), materials for a gratitude paper chain, DIY placemats or place cards, or easy crafts.



17. Pass out index cards and pens for each guest to write what they're thankful for this year. During dessert, ask everyone to share at least one item from their list.
18. You might not be able to invite the whole neighborhood to your table—but invite a couple of kids from the neighborhood to jump in your pile of leaves.
19. Consider your guests' unique strengths leading up to Friendsgiving. Would someone love making a playlist? Making a signature dish? Coordinating a kids' activity? Organizing touch football?
20. While the feast is cooking or adults are conversing, have a few kids' ideas in your back pocket: an outside game of hide-and-seek, a stack of blankets and pillows to build a fort in the basement, collecting leaves for collages, a showing of *A Charlie Brown Thanksgiving*.
21. Message guests in advance about their family's needs: allergies, a quiet place for naptime, a booster seat.
22. FamilyLife co-founder Barbara Rainey asks guests to offer one item of thanks for each of five kernels of corn left by their plate. It's a reminder of the daily allowance of corn each pilgrim was given for some days during their first hard year in America.
23. Open your Friendsgiving dinner with a warm, heartfelt prayer. Think about asking one of your kids to lead one, too.
24. To friends you encounter throughout this month (including your own home!), verbally communicate one thing you appreciate about them.
25. Plan ahead to help your joy on the day of your Friendsgiving. What could be done two days before? One day before? What could the kids or your spouse help with (like cleaning bathrooms)?
26. Choose meal-prep shortcuts to help you focus on what really matters, and what you want to remember about this day.



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