



Saturday

fiesta!

Make-your-own-taco parties are so much fun that guests won't realize they're doing all of your food prep. Keep it simple or overstuff the buffet with green-market finds; just make sure the space is decorated and music is cued before anyone arrives. "People want to walk into a party that's already going," says Keri Clavin, of the N.Y.C. duo Clavin Kelly Events. She and her partner, Victoria Kelly, created this menu. "And," Clavin adds, "guests also love gathering in the kitchen to help the hostess."



Otomi cocktail napkins, \$8 each; panamphoenix.com.

THE DRINK

MAXIMIZE A MARGARITA

The Clavin Kelly secret? Never use a store-bought mix. "That overly sweet, artificial taste can't compare to fresh lime juice," says Kelly.



Marui margarita glasses, Zak Designs, \$24/4; laprimashops.com.

THE DECOR

THINK BIG AND BRIGHT

Transform your space with color-rich paper flowers and folk-print napkins. "With a few touches, you can really feel like you're someplace different—not just hanging around the coffee table with a beer," Kelly says.

Confetti runner, Soukotyssu, \$150; at Bergdorf Goodman.



PAPER FLOWERS (\$6 each) and TIN LAMP SHADE (\$65); panamphoenix.com.

FOR THE TACO BAR

SOFT TORTILLAS

The ideal size is 6", either white corn (preferable) or flour. Count on three per person. To soften and warm, run fingers under the tap and pat each side with a few drops. Heat in a dry, nonstick frying pan for 30 seconds on each side. Wrap in foil and keep warm in the oven until you're ready.

SKIRT STEAK

Buy about a ¼ pound per person and marinate for at least 4 hours in fresh lime juice and olive oil with minced garlic, chopped cilantro, salt, and pepper. Grill until desired doneness. Cut against the grain in long slices.

TILAPIA OR MAHI-MAHI

Buy roughly ½ pound per person and use the same marinade as for the steak. Soak for no more than 1 hour; grill until just opaque in the center.

CORN

Grill cobs over high heat until charred in spots, then slice off kernels and toss with some fresh cilantro and red onion.

CHEESE

You can use any kind, but Clavin and Kelly prefer white cheeses, like queso fresco (a mild, crumbly Mexican variety) or Monterey Jack.

GREENS

Sliced iceberg lettuce or cabbage. Avoid leafy greens like mesclun that wilt easily.

PLUS YOUR FAVORITE SALSAS, GUACAMOLE & SOUR CREAM

Make it! END ON A SWEET NOTE

Enjoy ice cream sundaes, Mexican style: Spike the chocolate sauce with a dash of chile powder and serve with unsalted tortilla chips sprinkled with cinnamon and sugar and briefly baked.

THE IDEAL RECIPE

1 part fresh lime juice
¼ part triple sec or Cointreau
1 part silver tequila
Agave nectar to taste

Put ingredients and ice into a shaker. Shake well and strain into a margarita glass rimmed with salt and garnished with a lime wedge.

3 WAYS TO REV UP THE FLAVOR

- Add some macerated raspberries (soaked in triple sec or Cointreau) for fun color and tasty tartness.
- Hot-pink prickly pears—either canned in syrup or freshly chopped—add an exotic, light sweetness.
- Give your cocktails more kick by infusing salt with diced mild chiles and using the mixture to rim the glass.