

Special events



A lot of waste can be created at celebrations and gatherings. For example, household waste increases by 25 percent during the holiday season. Nationally, an additional one million tons of waste per week is generated during the holidays. But, it is possible to have special events such as holidays, birthdays, graduation parties, retirement parties and weddings and still avoid waste.

Planning tips

High-waste	Low-waste
Sending paper invites.	→ Invite people via email, phone, or social media.
Cooking massive amounts of food.	→ Plan carefully and only cook enough food for the people coming. Use Save the Food's Guestimator tool to help you plan: savethefood.com/guestimator
Throwing out leftovers.	→ Send leftovers home with guests. You can even ask guests to bring their own storage containers. Or, save leftovers for later in the refrigerator or freezer.
Using disposable plates, cups, bowls and utensils.	→ Use reusable dishware and utensils.
Buying new games for attendees to play.	→ Rent inflatable or large carnival-type games for kids. Ask attendees to bring their own games to share.
Having trash cans scattered around the event space.	→ Clearly mark all trash and recycling containers, and always keep them next to each other to make sorting easier.
Using single-use, disposable decorations such as balloons and banners	→ Decorate with items that can be reused, recycled or composted, are made from used or recycled materials, or given to guests to take home.

Find more tips for planning green events at hennepin.us/eventrecycling

"For National Night Out, my block started providing recycling and organics bins. But after seeing all the paper plates and plastic cups that were used, I encouraged my neighbors to bring their own reusable dishes and cups to the event to reduce the waste we generated."

– South Minneapolis resident