

## 282 - How to Have People Over to Eat

Hi there! I'm Kendra Adachi, and I'm here to help you be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. Today is episode 282 - how to have people over to eat. Feeding people at my house is one of my favorite things in the entire world, and I hope that my enthusiasm for it and the permission you'll hear in this episode will help you be excited about it, too. But I also know that we all have a lot of speedbumps when it comes to hospitality and entertaining and having people over, so I want to speak to a few of those today and maybe sand them down a little bit so they're less bumpy.

So we're going to go in the right order today and start with who do you want to have over, why does it matter, when could you do it, and then what will you eat. You often start with what you're going to eat and then get freaked out and just stop. The right order matters here, so let's take it.

So first thing, who do you want to have over? Start there. So often we're like "I should have more people over!" or something super general like that, and then we're stuck because of that whole wrong order thing. So who would you like to have over? Make a list of people you'd enjoy having in your home. Maybe it's one single person, maybe it's a larger group, but write down all of the possibilities that come to mind. Then start small with one. Just pick one. Pick a person or a family or a couple of people that you're going to prioritize having over soon. That's it.

Now before we move on to why it matters to have them over, let's also say a word about the regulars. We have instances where we invite people over on purpose, and then there are the people who are in and out of our home fairly regularly without our personal pursuit, like when your kids bring friends home from school or on the weekends or family members who live nearby. There are those casual, possibly spontaneous times when people are coming over and they feel super comfortable in your house, almost like they live there. There's an ease, and you also want to be prepared for that ease. So that's another way of looking at your list of who comes over. There's a difference in people you invite and people who don't mind inviting themselves. But write those down so you know what you're dealing with rather than just having this amebic grand idea of having people over. What people?

The next step is to ask why it matters. Why open your home to these people? Why are you wanting to do it? Naming that really helps you make decisions in the next two steps. Each person on your list could have a different why. Some possibilities on your list and their whys are the new neighbors and you want to meet them before so much time goes by that you feel weird not yet knowing their names. Maybe it's that couple from church who you always enjoy saying hi to but haven't had the chance to have a real conversation and would like to. Maybe it's a family of one of your kids' school friends because it's nice to be connected as families and not just as kids. Why does it matter to have each of those people over? And the answer could simply be to have fun. But I think putting a word or two to the reason and even the feeling you want those people to experience is super helpful to you as you have them over and to them so that they feel welcomed in the way you hope. So go down your list and write down why it matters to have each of those people over.

The third step is to focus on when you'll do it. Notice we haven't gotten to food yet at all. The food is last. Stop stressing about the food. Let's talk about when you'll do it. On that same list if you want, you can write down the time of day or week that it would be nice to have this person over, especially based on why you're doing it. If you want to have that couple from church over because you'd love to have a conversation with them but you have young kids, chances are conversation will not really happen if you have that couple over for a dinner that then transitions pretty quickly into bedtime. Instead, the best time to have that couple over for the reason you're wanting in the first place is after the kids are mostly in bed or at least ready for it. You see what I mean? Who it is and what you're hoping for impacts when you do it. It doesn't have to be dinner. Having people over to eat does not automatically mean dinner. It could mean breakfast, brunch, lunch, popsicles or hot chocolate in the yard in the afternoon, dinner, dessert later in the evening... whatever. So write down the time or times that would make the most sense for the people on your list.

Now I've mentioned this before, but one way that you could approach this is to put regular occurrences on your calendar of having people over to eat but without the people yet. If you notice that a lot of the times on your list are Saturday breakfast or lunch after church or a Friday night dinner, you can Decide Once to block out the first Saturday of every month to invite someone over for breakfast or something like that. Schedule the time, make a space for this before you even have the people in place. I've been doing that for lunches with friends, and it's been absolutely magical. I've hung out with half a dozen people over the last month that I haven't spent time with in months, all because I've put 1-2 lunches a week in place on my calendar. It's a really helpful thing.

Also having the who, why, and when all together does give us what we need for the inviting. Sometimes that's the hardest part, the asking someone to come over, especially if you've never really hung out with them before. Don't give up. If it doesn't work the first time and you have to cancel or they can't do the dates you offer, try again later. My rule of thumb is to try three times, and if you get three nos without a lot of enthusiasm for finding the next time, maybe those people would rather not hang out, and that's okay. But don't give up after the first time is what I'm saying.

Recently, we had a situation a little similar to this. One of my kids has a buddy at school, and he talks about her a lot. They've been friends for a couple of years, they've gone to each other's birthday parties, and when we've been with her family in those times, we really enjoyed our conversation. There were months of "we should hang out sometime" without ever doing it because life is life, right? At the end of last school year, I was like we are having this family over for dinner! And we never did. We went over a year all saying we should hang out but not doing it. Well, a few weeks ago, I texted the mom and said can y'all come over on this date. She couldn't but offered a different one, and we put it on the calendar. Then the day before that date, I got hit with a terrible cold, the remnants of which you can still hear in my voice, and we had to cancel. I was so bummed. But in that cancellation, I threw out another date a couple of weeks down the road, and it worked for them. We made it happen. Or are about to. When you're

listening to this, we will have had dinner with them over this past weekend, but right now when I'm recording, they're coming over in a couple of days. Hopefully, right? But my point here is these things can often take time, and it's easy to get discouraged when they don't work perfectly the first time. Nothing does. Just keep at it in the kindest way possible.

### **We'll be right back...**

One final word on the "when" piece goes back to those spontaneous slash regular visitors for meals, like family and friends or friends of your kids. You could notice that most Friday nights, your teenagers bring somebody home from school. Plan it. Put that in the calendar. Assume you will have people join you on Friday nights or whatever. Or don't plan anything. Be willing to be spontaneous. Usually the thing we stress out over with spontaneous meal invitations is the food which we're about to get to. But honestly people don't care as much as we think. Last night, my mom stayed for dinner, and as I pulled out the produce I was going to make and it was all rotten, I had to pivot. I also had gotten home later than I thought so I had less time to make dinner the way I intended. So I just threw some chicken thighs in a baking dish with some barbecue sauce and baked it for twenty minutes or something, I put frozen fries in the airfryer, and I cut up some carrots and apples. Y'all, I fed my mother crinkle fries and carrot sticks like she was a toddler. And yet who actually cares. She didn't! Those carrots were bomb, y'all. They were so sweet. But the point of my mom staying for dinner isn't about the food. It's about the being together in all the regular of life. So keep that in mind with your spontaneous meal companions. Remember what matters, and it's rarely the food. You can feed them with whatever you have.

And now final step, we figure out what we're going to eat. I already said this, but it doesn't have to be dinner. It can be any meal or even a snack. I remember Shannan Martin either did this recently or shared when someone else did, but she or someone else texted the neighbors and said everybody bring a snack we're going to sit out in the yard and hang out. And people came! We all long for connection, and the more that connection is without pretense or being impressive, the easier it is for people to say yes. So remember it doesn't have to be dinner.

It also doesn't have to be indoors. You can do the yard thing or the front porch thing or the meeting at the park thing. It doesn't have to be around a table. It can be on a picnic blanket or on the couch around a coffee table or standing in the kitchen because that's how a lot of us eat.

For awhile, we had a dining table in a separate dining room that was big to hold a lot of people, but it was a bit unwieldy in its size and how the chairs worked, and it's a long unimportant story. The point is that when we would have a family over that we hang out with a lot, the kids would sit at our regular kitchen table that's right there in the kitchen and not in a separate dining room, and the adults would hang around the island. But we only have two barstools, so our friends would sit there, and Kaz and I would either stand up or sit on a little bench in the kitchen where we all sit down to put on our shoes. The number of meals we've eaten that way is many, and it's great. It doesn't really matter because of what matters most about being with those friends.

Now here's the thing. This is why the list of who you're having over and why you're doing it matters. If you are having your boss and her husband over or something because you want to connect with them but also you're trying to establish more of a relationship so you can move up in the company or something, your purpose will dictate the when and the food you eat. I'm guessing you won't make your boss stand while the kids take all the chairs, but I don't know your boss. My point here is that it's normal and okay for different people to require or compel certain decisions around the meal. That's okay. Not everybody needs to get crinkle fries. It's fine if you want to cook something that's a little more put together for someone that you're trying to connect with for purposes beyond just relationship. This does feel decidedly like more of a 1960s scenario than one right now, but it's a good example nonetheless.

Okay, so what do you eat? It doesn't have to be dinner, it doesn't have to be indoors which impacts the food. It doesn't have to be impressive, right? Who you're having over, when they're coming, and what matters about it will very likely give you some helpful limitations in what to make, whether it's dessert or an easy dinner or breakfast or whatever. But here are some practical ways to think about the actual meals or foods you might cook.

First, you can use the principle of Decide Once to name the meal you always make for dinner the first time someone comes over. Pick something you know how to make in your sleep, that doesn't stress you out, and that is always the thing you make the first time someone comes over. Or every time! It doesn't matter! You could also create a matrix of three or four meals that you enjoy cooking, that are easy for a few more people, and just rotate through those meals for all of your entertaining requirements. For example, when you mark that first Saturday of the month as when you have someone over for breakfast, you can put in the notes of that calendar item what you're making. French toast casserole the first month, biscuits and bacon the second month, waffles and egg casserole the third month, and then just keep rotating them or whatever. Make it easy on yourself.

Ultimately, not starting with the food makes deciding the food that much easier. If you're having this person over for this reason at this time, the food almost takes care of itself. You're not choosing from every meal ever. Just pick the thing that makes the most sense that you feel comfortable making. And if you're not a cook, order pizza. Put out meats and cheeses and fruits. Order perfectly grilled Greek chicken from your local place and supplement it with a big salad or storebought pita bread heated up in a low oven. Take the pressure off. You can make a lovely welcoming meal without cooking it. But the problem isn't "what should I cook when people come over?" That's starting with the wrong thing. Start with who is coming, why they're coming and what matters about it, and when they'll be there. Then pick the food that makes the most sense for you and them. Simple? Yes. Slightly annoying because you haven't gone in this order before and you don't think it'll work? Also possibly yes. But still try it. It makes all the difference.

Before we go, let's celebrate the Lazy Genius of the Week! Today it's Natalie Seymour who sent me this message on Instagram. "Hi, Kendra! I wanted to share a slightly different way I used the episode on fall planning from a couple of weeks ago. I have an autoimmune disease that often flares with weather changes and stress... basically a given in the fall. I used the steps from the

episode to narrow down what matters most when I'm sick: food, fluids, rest, pain relief, and comfort. I listened items from that those categories that help, and i put them together in a "flare kit." I have shelf stable items like my favorite instant pho, powered smoothie mix, tea, etc. plus a heating pad, meds, candle, and other comforts. All those items are in a cute basket in the guest room closet ready for when I need them. Knowing that I have what I will need helps ease some of the anxiety. Thanks for the inspiration." Natalie, I could not love this more. Partly because I get asked quite often to do an episode about chronic illness and how to support yourself in that, and you just nailed such a great way to do that. Some of the principles I'm seeing here are batching. You're getting everything together at the same time. Put everything in its place: you're putting everything you need together in one spot ready to grab when you need it. Live in the season. You're naming that this is a difficult one for your flare-ups and are being kind to yourself in creating support for when things get hard. I just love the execution of the principles here but also the way you're adjusting what I'm talking about to fit what you need. And that's the entire point here, y'all. I'm not trying to be the expert on telling you what to do. I just want to keep being here to help remind you how to think. You are the expert at solving your own problems, not me, so I love this example of that. Thanks, Natalie, for being the Lazy Genius of the Week!

Okay, that's it for today! Thanks y'all for listening, and until next time, be a genius about the things that matter and lazy about the things that don't. I'm Kendra, and I'll see you next week!