

# About Our Children

Useful, Current, Accurate Information for Jewish Families

## Q&A

Questions for professional organizers Susan Corbo and Bernadette Flaim of Leonia-based Attention2Detail ([www.a2donline.com](http://www.a2donline.com)), on how to get organized for the holiday season.



Photo / Dee Portera

**Q: What's the best way to get organized for the holidays?**

**SC:** Most important is to set a time line.

**Q: So what should be included?**

**BF:** If you're planning a Chanukah meal, you would plan the menu ahead of time, and bullet the items that can be made in advance and frozen. Then you make a list of items that you don't mind delegating to guests. That's really critical, but it's a matter of being able to "let go."

**SC:** Then you make up your grocery lists because now you know what you need and what you don't need, so you're not over-buying or double-buying items you've given out as assignments to family and friends.

**BF:** Include things like film, batteries, beverages, and those kinds of things you really wouldn't think about necessarily. Then write up a to-do list that incorporates your cleaning, selection of serving pieces, linens, and tableware, shopping, decorating, and all the things that you can do prior to the event. And don't forget delegating your to-do list that's really important.

**Q: What else can be done in advance?**

**BF:** About two weeks prior you should also order your main entrée items and start cleaning out your refrigerator and freezer. Prepare and eat that food that's already in there to make room for your holiday meals.

**SC:** This also makes it easier when you're trying to get organized and ready for the holiday, you have frozen food, just defrost it and use it; so you get a two-fer out of that.

**BF:** It also makes room for those items that you can prepare and freeze ahead.

**Q: What comes one week before?**

**BF:** At this point you should re-evaluate your to-do list, and be realistic. Cross out things that can be skipped. Your goal is not to photograph your meal for Bon Appetit, but to make a beautiful meal for your family.

**SC:** So if you were thinking of painting and you haven't done so yet, it's not a good time to start!

**BF:** Also, arrange for child-related activities to keep your young guests busy. Whether it's an arts & crafts table, or making decorations, place cards, or other items. And the last one-week prior item would be to plan the seating arrangements.

**SC:** Two days before, shop for the perishable items and set the table it makes it so much easier the day of your event and get out all of your serving pieces so that day you're not scrambling for the gravy boat or whatever.

**Q: Things won't get dusty?**

**SC:** Your house will have already been cleaned, and you can always turn glasses and dishes over. It's much less stressful

when it's done, and that's one less thing you have to worry about.

**Q: Okay, what next?**

**BF:** One day before, prepare dishes that can't be frozen, chill your beverages, arrange fresh flowers or centerpieces, and then do spot cleaning. On the day of your gathering, cook the items that you can't prepare ahead, and hopefully by following a time line you will have some quality time that day with your family.

**SC:** It's also a great idea to institute a family calendar, at least for this very busy time of the year, so that everybody's events are on one calendar. And now that everybody's lives are so busy, a "save the date" card isn't a bad idea if you're hosting an event or party. You can do that several months ahead, even as an email.

**Q: Any advice about gifts?**

**BF:** Buy attractive gifts in bulk like fancy dipping oils or chocolates especially if you have business or teacher gifts to hand out. It's much more financially feasible and streamlined. We love the idea of buying in bulk. We recommend starting a holiday binder, too, that includes favorite recipes, receipts, a card list, a gift list to keep track from year to year. And what a lovely thing to be able to pass down from generation to generation.