

# Reader's digest

## Food Network Star Reveals the 6 Golden Rules of the Perfect Easter Brunch

Bon appetit!

Celebrity chef and Food Network star Alex Guarnaschelli loves Easter *and* brunch, so she shared her favorite dishes to fill the table (and hungry bellies) with that feel and taste like family.



### Choose spring flavors

Usher in spring by choosing fresh flavors that celebrate the season. “I like a frittata with some spring asparagus and a drizzle of balsamic vinaigrette. I’ll also make a sugar snap pea salad with mustard dressing,” she says. If you can find pea shoots, sprinkle them on top of both for an extra burst of freshness that tastes just like spring. If you don’t know where to start with menu planning, [consider this free Easter guide your official go-to](#). Another idea: Turn to your favorite restaurants. Browse the menu and pick one dish from each to try to recreate.

Guarnaschelli’s midtown Manhattan spot, [Butter](#), has sweet and savory elevated brunch classics, while [Market Table](#) in New York City’s West Village has a rotating seasonal menu that’s perfect for figuring out which flavors scream spring.

## Don't forget the ham

Whether you're a lamb fan or a ham fan, make sure the latter is on your table. Not only is it an Easter staple, it's also an effortless dish you can throw in the oven and forget about until it's time to slice. Plus, it makes the perfect nighttime snack when you're finally hungry again. Nestle leftover slices between warm folds of another Guarnaschelli Easter essential, [Parker House rolls](#), soft and fluffy pillows of buttery goodness that are topped with a kosher salt sprinkle. For vegetarian guests, lay out a small platter of vegetarian "ham," like [Sweet Earth's Harmless Ham](#), a vegan option.



## Cocktails are key

What's brunch without a little booze?! "I always mix a pitcher of sangria or a classic screwdriver (orange juice and vodka) for the table," says Guarnaschelli. "I also love a Greyhound—vodka and grapefruit. It's refreshingly different." And always include a non-alcoholic beverage that guests of all ages can enjoy. Instead of traditional store-bought sodas, she suggests making your own Easter variety. Make an herbed simple syrup by simmering equal parts sugar and water with some fresh mint or basil. Top it off with club soda for the kids or sparkling wine for the adults. Also try these [diet-friendly cocktails](#) that won't pack on the pounds.



## Connect the décor to the dishes

“I like to connect the table with [Easter egg décor](#). So if I’m making a frittata, I’ll decorate with painted Easter eggs,” she says. Save yourself some time and keep the kiddos occupied by setting up an egg-dying station, then have them fill baskets with their colorful creations.

“Easter is an arts and crafts moment where your whole family and friends can get involved,” says Guarnaschelli. She also likes to harness that “springtime vibe” by placing baskets of grass and flowers on the table, or by covering the table in a sturdy pastel paper tablecloth that kids (and adults!) can doodle on between courses.

## Put your guests to work

There’s nothing wrong with having your brunch guests lend a helping hand. Lay out the table settings and decorations ahead of time and have them dress things up while you finish in the kitchen. You can also have them assemble an appetizer station with crudités and dip that they can munch on without filling up. Or, really spread the work (and love) by throwing an Easter potluck brunch where everyone brings an appetizer, side dish, or dessert while you provide a hearty dish like ham or baked manicotti, an Italian Easter classic. If you’re really lazy or just too busy, you can even get the staples delivered. [Orchard Table by Harry and David](#) offers different Easter packages, including their Gourmet Brunch (a spread of honey-glazed spiral ham; three-cheese scalloped potatoes; artichoke, mushroom, and bacon frittata; and a sweet surprise).



## Keep dessert light

Dessert doesn’t have to be decadently heavy to be delicious. “I love Italian pine nut cookies made with almost too much almond extract, or a simple almond cake with honey,” says Guarnaschelli. “As a tribute to my mother, who’s a Massachusetts gal, I sometimes go for a batch of Whoopie pies, a classic New England treat.” Or, skip the baking all together and join the kids in gobbling up Easter candy! Fill a big bowl or basket with a variety of chocolates, jelly beans, and other fun sweets. For more sophisticated candies, try [Chuo Chocolatier](#), which offers decadent bars with fun flavors, or [Justin’s](#), which makes dark, milk, and white chocolate peanut butter cups. You can also order one pre-made, like [Harry and David’s Golden Easter Egg gift](#), which doubles as a centerpiece.