

Host vs Guest Holiday Planning Matrix

Use this quick matrix to decide how much control you actually have before the event starts.

Situation	Your Main Advantage	Your Main Risk	Best Next Move
Guest and you know the menu	you can pre-plan	hidden ingredients in mixed dishes	ask about key ingredients and bring one backup
Guest and you do not know the menu	you can still bring food	hunger plus uncertainty	eat earlier, bring a dish, carry a snack
Host with full menu control	you can simplify the table	trying to make every dish complex	keep one reliable main and two reliable sides
Host sharing cooking with others	you can separate components	unclear sauces and add-ins	keep gravies and toppings separate where possible
Staying overnight after the meal	you can control breakfast and leftovers	all-day grazing and sloppy storage	portion leftovers early and reset to normal meals next day

Quick Decision Rules

- If you are a guest, your job is not total control. Your job is one reliable dish plus one backup.
- If you are the host, your job is not to low-FODMAP every tradition. Your job is to make the table easier to navigate.
- If the menu is uncertain, downgrade certainty and simplify the rest of the day.

Lower-Risk Holiday Plate Order

1. Start with the clearest foods first.
2. Add uncertain dishes only if you still want them and the rest of the plate is already low-noise.
3. Keep drinks and dessert deliberate instead of automatic.

Leftovers Rule

- Refrigerate perishable foods promptly.
- Use many cooked leftovers within 3 to 4 days.
- Reheat leftovers thoroughly before eating them again.