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# Queeries

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# SAMPLE COLUMN

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## How to have a successful lesbian potluck?

*Q: I hate to be a stereotype, but I'm going to have a lesbian potluck next month. It's the food that has me worried, though. The last time I did this, I wound up with several different versions of lentil salad, no main courses, and no ingenuity. How can I get my friends to do better?*

A: Well, you can get them to do better by doing better yourself. Get organized. By that, I mean give out assignments. One way is to divide your guest list alphabetically with one group bringing appetizers and salads (you might tell this team jokingly, "let's skip the lentil salad this year"), another main dishes, and the last, desserts. Maybe you can provide the beverages yourself.

And the next time you're a potluck guest? Inquire whether anyone coming has special dietary considerations – perhaps someone is vegan or lactose intolerant or has celiac disease, for example. (If you yourself have special needs, be sure to bring something that you can eat and let your host know beforehand so there are no worries.)

Potluck guests should also avoid making their dish at the host's house, even if it's just a salad. All the prep work should be done at home, except perhaps for reheating a dish right before serving.

## Guess who's coming to dinner? Your ex!

*Q: It's said that in the lesbian and gay community, "we are an army of lovers and ex-lovers." How do you handle invites, seating arrangements, etc., when you know that so many of the guests are former lovers - and you want to invite them all?*

A: Indeed, what they say is true. I remember being unpleasantly shocked at a

birthday party for my former boyfriend Victor to see all four of his other exes in attendance. At one point, the five of us were even corralled into a group photo. Flash! Posterity recorded. What Victor hadn't counted on was that we would talk - talk about him - and since we were all history, as they say, we had a lot of pent-up dish. By night's end, the entire party was referring to our merry little band as "Victor's Victims." Probably not what Victor had in mind.

Back to your question! First of all, as a host, you need to think of your guests comfort. Just because you want to invite them all, doesn't mean you should. Masked or unmasked bitterness, rage or jealousy can quickly tank the best of parties. But if you're committed to this potentially prickly guest list, be transparent. You don't need to tell each guest who among their exes will be present, but if they ask, fess up. Then, it's every man and woman for him or herself. Some will simply not show, but at least the others know what they're getting into.

Likewise, if you're having trouble choosing between two separated lovers, feel free to invite them both. Let them choose to attend or not. Or the exes can decide between themselves what's appropriate. But again, if asked whether the other is invited or attending, say what you know.

As for seating arrangements, you've got to be kidding. You can't just put a group of unhappy souls at a table and ask them to break bread together. Instead, make sure the party is big enough so that folks can hide in corners or behind a tree.

## The art of mingling (LGBT-style)

*Q: Whenever I have a party, it seems that my lesbian friends stay to themselves and my gay male friends do the same. How can I encourage my guests to mingle instead of clinging to their same-gender friends?*

A: Of course, the larger question is: How do you get people who don't know each

*An advice column for gays - and straights? That's right. Steven Petrow, author of The Essential Book of Gay Manners and Etiquette, is dishing advice on a hodgepodge of topics - including coming out, "sexting" and homophobia - to us and our allies in Q Syndicate's latest column, "Queeries." Petrow, also the former National Lesbian & Gay Journalists Association president, offers thorough feedback with insightful, sometimes anecdotal answers.*

other to try and connect? Sad to say, but most of us like to stick with our own kind, or at least with what's tried and true. With strangers, simply starting a conversation can be the biggest challenge. And this is where a good host makes all the difference. Go around the party and match up people who happen to have something - pretty much anything - in common. For instance, "Rochelle, I'd like you to meet Mike; he also lived in St. Louis before moving here." Or: "Mike, you probably didn't know that Rochelle has a new puppy too."

Of course, one of the reasons that the gays and the lezzies may be staying in their own camps at your parties is that they're on the prowl for a date. Here, too, a good host intervenes. Introduce Sally to Jeanne, saying something like: "You're two of my favorite people and you're both screenwriters. I think you should know each other." And then let them be. Your work is done. Until the next party.

*Steven Petrow is the author of The Essential Book of Gay Manners & Etiquette. Send your manners questions to him at [queeries@live.com](mailto:queeries@live.com).*