



Be the hostess with the mostest (a count-down guide)

The week before...

- Try a night sleeping in your guest bed. You will discover first hand if there is anything that would make it more comfortable. Bedside lights? An electric blanket? A new bed?!
- Extra blankets and pillows, some magazines and a TV in the guest room will make visitors feel cosy and cared for... and it makes their room somewhere more inviting if they want some space for an hour or two.
- Cook up a delicious chicken and leek pie filling. Spoon into little ramekin dishes, and freeze ahead of time. You can defrost on the day of your guests' arrival, top with circles of puff pastry, brush with beaten egg and bake to perfection, as though you have been slaving all day.

The day before...

- Fluff up duvets and pillows and put on fresh, scented covers. Pile up towels on a chair, topped with a lavender-stuffed cushion.
- For guests you really want to spoil leave a little welcome basket of overnight goodies at the end of their bed: tissue-wrapped scented soap, a tin of cookies, a new toothbrush and handcream. Add a pack of headache pills, too, in case your guest has forgotten theirs.
- Leave bottled water and a glass by their bed.

On the day...

- Before guests arrive, add shine and freshness to your home in double-quick time. Try new Flash Clean & Care on surfaces all around your home. With a touch of traditional ingredients such as almond extract, bicarbonate of soda, natural soap and white vinegar it takes care of even the most delicate surfaces – simply spray and wipe for a sparkling finish.
- Give guests a relaxed welcome. However busy you are, sit down and have a drink with them as soon as they arrive. Get them so laid-back and at home, they will (hopefully) be offering to peel potatoes and pour their own drinks.
- Yes, you've turned your heating down a notch this autumn to reduce your carbon footprint. But this is the time to crank your thermostat up a degree or two again. You will prob-

ably be hot from cooking and looking after your visitors. But your guests might be slowly freezing, and too polite to say so.

- Make sure visitors have snacks and fruit to nibble on after their journey. If they feel well fed, you won't have to rush the main meal of the day.