

Planning a Terrific Party

Planning the terrific party can be somewhat of a challenge and more than just a little intimidating. To help make the process easier, we'd like to share with you some helpful party tips below so that you and your guests can enjoy a wonderful party! On Your Mark, Get Set -- Plan Your Party!



Setting the Date: First, you'll need to decide on the date of your party. Be sure to send your party invitations at least 1-3 weeks before the day of your party so your friends will have enough time to RSVP and so you'll have enough time to plan the perfect event. Early invitations will also ensure that your friends haven't already scheduled something else for that day. Also consider inviting your guests by telephone as you will more than likely get an immediate response (another advantage of calling is you can ask if your guests have any food allergies or preferences). With the invitation, remember to include all the details that the guests should know to come prepared. For example, if you're planning a pool party, tell your guests to come prepared to swim and sun in the afternoon. Also, giving enough advanced notice helps people to make babysitting and other arrangements if needed. Make sure to check the calendar for long holiday weekends or other big occasions – like the Superbowl – where people may be conflicted.

Your Guest List: Creating the perfect guest list can also be a challenge. Since your primary goal is to ensure that your guests have a good time, you should create your guest list by considering factors like compatibility, age, professional circles, and personal backgrounds. Don't be afraid to mix the group up a bit (i.e., feel free to invite people from different professional circles and backgrounds) as this will give your guests the chance to meet a diverse group of people that they wouldn't ordinarily meet. Also, give your guests a clear idea of what the appropriate attire will be – such as casual, formal, suit-and-tie.

Kids or No Kids: You need to decide early in the process whether children are invited. If not, people may need to make babysitting arrangements. If you decide to invite children, make sure to include age-appropriate activities to keep them happy and busy. For instance, for young kids, consider a drawing or coloring table, arts and crafts, or story time.

Party Theme & Decorations: You'll next need to choose the appropriate theme for your party. If you choose to entertain around the holidays, choosing a theme and decorations may be easy as you can simply incorporate the traditional decorations and food for that occasion. You can even decorate with the seasons too! For some beautiful but inexpensive decorations, consider fresh flowers in the summertime, a bowl of polished apples and spruce twigs in the winter, or a vase with colorful leaves in the fall.

Consider a small activity for all your guests can participate in, like guessing the number of pennies in a container or the top 5 highest money-making bands of all time. Give away a bottle of wine or movie passes to the winner.

Food & Drink: If you're not the most talented chef or if preparing your own party food will simply be an overwhelming task, consider other acceptable alternatives such as ordering take-out or buying deli foods. If you're very busy, you can even have a cookout, potluck or picnic. For an afternoon party, some popular menu choices include: Panini sandwiches (turkey, ham, and vegetarian) with sliced tomatoes and olive oil served with fresh basil and slices of mozzarella. Consider also serving sliced cantaloupe and/or gala apples with Gelato Italian ice (for dessert). For your adult guests, some party favorite drinks may include white wine spritzers with a lime wedge, gin and tonic, Campari and club soda on the rocks with lemon or lime or Vodka tonic. Fruit smoothies are also perfect for warm days, and you can never go wrong with ice tea.

Choosing the Music: Having background music can help put people in a festive mood. Choosing the right type of music can be a challenge. Generally, your music selection will depend on the age and tastes of your guests and more importantly -- your party theme. For example, if you're having a holiday party, then playing traditional holiday songs would be best. Alternatively, if your party theme includes an afternoon pool party, then playing music from The Beach Boys, Jimmy Buffet and Bob Marley would be most appropriate. In the event you're planning an evening party, consider playing more sultry music by Frank Sinatra, Dinah Washington, or Herbie Mann. Asking your friends ahead of time about their music preferences can also help ensure they'll have a great time at the party!

Remember – the key to planning a successful party is to plan ahead and to pay attention to the little details. By following the above tips, we're certain you'll have a wonderful time at your own party ...so let the festivities begin!!!