

Celebratory Occasions

Tips for spring party planning

BY MARIA BENSON AND KATHERINE ALFORD

Entertaining has become fundamental to contemporary living. Within the next few months you will most likely become involved (directly or indirectly) with some type of entertaining whether it is hosting a gathering for a few friends, organizing a corporate function, or coordinating a family event. Easter, Passover, et al, mark the beginning of spring, and usher in a number of celebratory occasions: Mother's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Father's Day, Bridal/Baby Showers and Graduations — there are plenty of reasons to celebrate during this time of year.

As with any project — the more planning and organizing you do up front, the more enjoyable the process and end result will be. This definitely holds true for entertaining. Most formal events require six to eight weeks of planning. However, with a little forethought you can pull off a sophisticated event in as little as four to five weeks of planning.

The generic timeline shown here was designed to assist you in planning your event. Remember that creating a budget, developing (and adhering to) a plan and staying organized are essential to the success of your event..



Six Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine date, location, budget, and number of guests • Assess needs – furnishings, tableware, decorations, household repairs, rental needs, etc. • Create a party/event planning "to do" list • Reserve location (if necessary)
Five Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Select menu • Create guest list and compile addresses • Shop for invitations or create your own • Reserve rentals
Four Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send out invitations • Shop for decorations and special supplies • Shop for party favors
Three Weeks Out	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Determine floral needs and place floral orders • Determine outstanding entertaining needs • Make recipe shopping list • Select party favors
Two Weeks Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit venue to review event setup (if applicable) • Confirm menu • Wrap/assemble party favors • Put together music library for your party (if applicable)
Week Of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm RSVPs • Shop for recipe ingredients • Begin preliminary party setup and decorating • Confirm all orders and schedule deliveries/pickups • Provide venue with final guest count
The Day Before	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shop for last-minute recipe ingredients • Finish cleaning and setup for party/event • Prepare marinades, sauces, and beverages that can be made ahead of time • Receive last-minute deliveries
Day Of	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Finish food preparation • Arrange centerpieces • Set the table • Start the music • Light the candles

	\$	\$\$	\$\$\$
Location	Private Home	Urban Tea Loft	Lon's at the Hermosa
Budget	\$250	\$500	\$1000
Theme	Taco Bar	Urban Tea Party	Rustic Brunch
Example Occasion	Cinco de Mayo Get Together	Baby Shower	Graduation Party
# of Guests	20	15	30
Sample Menu	Chicken Steak Tortillas Taco Shells Salsa Rice and Beans Taco Trimmings Aqua Fresca and Margaritas	Chicken Chowder Poached Pear Salad Choice of UBLT Croissant Caprese Melt Oven Roasted Chicken Salad Exotic Teas and Tea-tinis	Brunch Buffet Smoked Salmon Roasted Chicken and Strawberry Salad Huevos Rancheros Fresh Fruit Pancakes French Toast
Ambience	Set the stage by using Mexican blankets (falsas) to cover tables and serving areas; add ambience by using tea lights, daisies, and earthenware for tablescapes	Two private dining areas and in a hip urban setting – services include an event designer and completely custom menus	Three distinctive private dining areas to choose from – Board Room (20), Library (32), and Stetson Room (up to 50)
Party Favor Suggestions	Gift bags containing Hot Tamales and Mexican Soda	Gift bags containing an assortment of tea	Bandanas filled with trail mix and nuts
Additional Information	www.qdoba.com Catering available for as little as \$8.00 per person	www.urbantealoft.com Private dining areas include surround sound with 47" Flat Screen TVs, DVD/CD players, and iPod docking	www.lons.com Intimate setting in the shadow of Camelback Mountain



Fortunately entertaining today can be as elaborate or as simple as you would like it to be. Everyone appreciates great food, but they really appreciate a happy, cordial host. With that said, don't be afraid to serve variety of dishes mixing homemade items with items from your favorite grocers and restaurants.

We enjoy hosting events, but often find that we are short on time. As part of our ongoing quest to stress-less, we actively seek venues and resources to facilitate our entertaining needs. If you enjoy being the

host, but dread the work, you may want to consider one of these stress-less options.

Remember the saying "location, location, location?" For party givers, it's "ambience, ambience, ambience." Selecting the backdrop for your party is also key. The right music, accents, aromas and special touches make the difference. When entertaining at home consider placing a lit candle or fresh potpourri in the powder room. If you are hosting a shower or birthday party take a photo of each guest with the party honoree or a group photo that can be included in each thank-you note. When hosting an event to celebrate a special occasion, include a special "toast" and ask others to plan to say a few special words — using digital media to show special photos or video on a TV monitor also add those extra touches that are oh so appreciated.

Plan ahead and enjoy your party! 🎉



Maria Bailey Benson and Katherine Alford took their interior design passion and made

it happen in a big and beautiful way when they recently opened Nyla Simone Home, a new luxury home furnishings boutique. The fashion-forward store offers custom-made furnishings, fine linens, gifts, in-home design and interior party planning services. Nyla Simone Home has a staff of seven, including two ASID-certified interior designers and is open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. and Sundays from noon to 5 p.m. Visit Nyla Simone Home at 1705 Ruby Drive, Suite 105, Tempe, AZ or at www.nylasimonehome.com.

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