HOW TO PLAN A COCKTAIL PARTY

- by Ralph Galdorisi, Jr.

Planning ahead for your cocktail party can help insure the success of your event. Here are some tips to help you have a great party:

- Select Guests Carefully

  Here's a tip: Invite a variety of people. Don't just stick to the comfort zone of friends and associates. Bringing in new people together creates new relationships and different personalities will boost the energy of the party. Caution: Alcohol also brings out the obnoxious in people; those known to be insulting should be monitored or eliminated from the guest list.

- Start With A Budget

  The Budget will set the stage for all decisions that you make.

- Determine If You Need a Caterer

  How much time, energy and hard work do you want to dedicate before, during and after the party. If you want to be a guest at your own party, the services of a caterer are the way to achieve a stress free event. Services from gourmet food that matches the party to presentation, equipment, linens, wait staff and cleanup are the normal required services to enjoy the party. In addition, a caterer does this for a living; they will help with things you would never think of.

- Decide Your Role And Take Action

  When you know the path you've chosen, hiring a caterer or doing it yourself - make a detailed list and get to work.

- Decide If Wait Staff And A Bartender Are Monies Well Spent

  The work in entertaining is exhausting. Set up, prep & service and clean-up can leave you wiped out. The wait staff, under an agreed upon agenda will be a big help. Bartenders can help with theme drinks which guests will love. They can also be a governor to avoid overdrinking. Discuss your wants and concerns beforehand to avoid embarrassing a guest.

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- Decorate And Set-up A Day Or More Ahead

  People and some caterers often underestimate the time it takes to decorate or setup a room/house for entertaining. Is furniture in the way? Is there adequate table space? Although people tend to mingle, guests like to eat while seated. Is kitchen area clear for workspace and high traffic? (Guests never seem to leave the kitchen, and that's where there food is being prepared for service.)

- Details - Details!

  Ask the caterer for an event checklist for you to review. Examples: lawn sprinkler is off; spray for mosquitoes, guest parking; special guests; floral arrangements and music.

- Wines Match The Food

  Open appropriate wines an hour before the party. Consult with the wine store for the best selections (Coliseum Caterers recommends Young's in Manhasset, Raeders in Roslyn and MAB in East Meadow for knowledgeable and helpful liquor stores).

- Review Your Checklist

  Think through the night. How would you like it to go? Review agenda with all hired help to be certain they run the party as your party.

- Relax

  Give yourself ample time to get ready and prepare yourself. Have fun!

WHEN CHOOSING A CATERER, THE FOLLOWING ARE SOME IMPORTANT CRITERIA TO ASK ABOUT:

- Food Handlers Safety Certificate
- Board of Health Inspection Rating
- Customer Service Agents and Guarantees
- Executive Team to oversee your job details
- Award Winning Culinary Team
- Catering Consultants who are knowledgeable and happy to help
- Owners who care

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