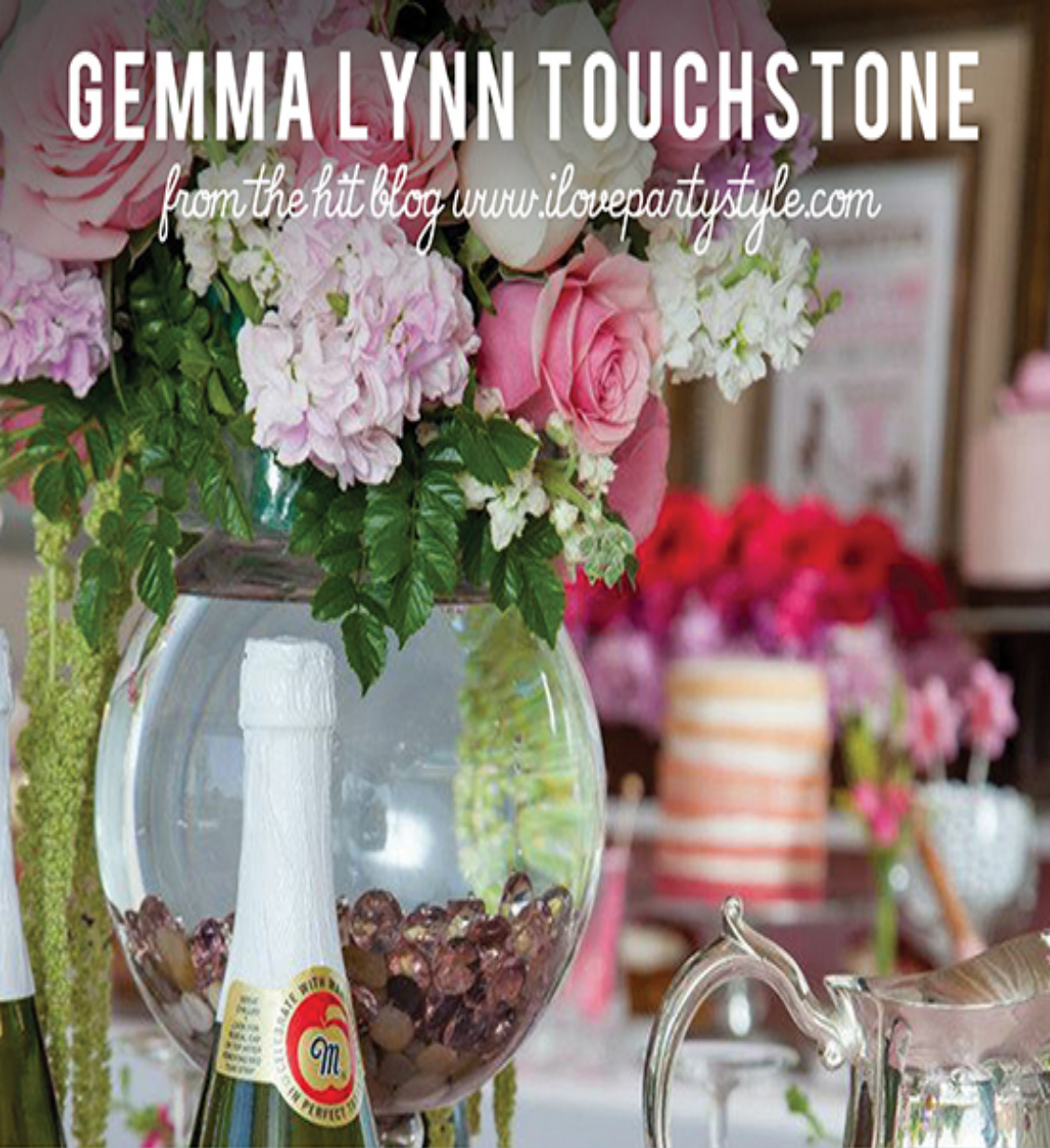


GEMMA LYNN TOUCHSTONE

from the hit blog www.ilovepartystyle.com



PARTY STYLE

Kids' Parties From Baby to Sweet 16



CONTENTS

A PERFECT PARTY

DETERMINE YOUR PARTY STYLE – TAKE THE QUIZ

MAKE IT MEMORABLE

PARTY TIMELINE CHECKLIST

MODERN-DAY PARTY ETIQUETTE & FORMALITIES

PARTY DETAILS AND DECORATION SHOW YOUR STYLE

PERFECT PARTY TIPS AND HELPFUL HINTS

MENU SELECTION

DIY PARTY FOOD STATIONS FOR KIDS

PARTY STYLE CELEBRATIONS

MY PARTY STYLE PARTNERS

GEMMA'S GO-TO GUIDE OF STYLE MAKERS & BEST BRANDS

SWEET NOTES

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



> A WISH FOR THE STYLE MAKER IN YOU <

To me, style and love go hand-in-hand. It is what we seek out in life that make us feel good, that makes us feel inspired, and that makes us feel alive and in love with our lives. There truly are so many variables to a style, and each person has the ability to create their own individual style by really focusing on what they love, what colors, textures, feelings, objects, and shapes conjure emotion. True style is developed by separating the likes from the loves, by meshing contrasting feelings, and by being able to convey a message visually.

My style shines through as I create parties, displays, and pretty settings that hopefully will make you feel something and inspire you to create amazing moments in time to share with the people most important to you. I like to think of planning and styling as an art, and a place in time is my canvas. With my art I aim to create a lasting feeling, a memory that each guest gets to take home and enjoy for years to come. Party planning is the most fun part of the experience for me. Getting to craft something special with a friend or a sister, staying up all night, rushing to get it done, trying hard to get it right, laughing at the things you missed or the things that go wrong—as they sometimes do, no matter how well you planned it out. These are the moments that you'll cherish, the fun working and the working before the fun; these are the stories that make up our lives. My wish is that we make magic together, whether it be through this book or my blog, or as you use my products to make memories in your home. I wish to inspire you to create meaningful, memorable moments with your family and friends that will last a lifetime. Embrace your true style and make your party shine with originality and personality. The fun thing about design is with the basic principles in play

you can create something beautiful, stylish, and all your own.



chapter one

A PERFECT PARTY

If you want to have a perfect party, then you have to have perfect planning. While there are many, many things to consider when planning your party, you will need to focus on “what the party is about” to get the planning started. Doing your best to be organized about the event details is the key to making the hosting a breeze and making your party go off without a hitch. It will make all the difference in the world for you if you sit down and plan out your vision. If you take a minute to visualize the party, who it is for, and what will make that person smile, then you can get the ball rolling on everything else. To start, write out a description on paper or on your tablet. Then, based on that description, write down your plan. This pre-planning description will save you time, save you money, and save you from stress come the day of your party. This should also be the very first thing that you put in your party-planning folder. The party-planning folder is an effective tool especially for first-time planners as you go through the process of organizing a little party for your child’s birthday with all of their friends. To them, this party is a really, really big deal. Be prepared, plan well, and keep your party-planning folder up-to-date and you will not let your little one down.

YOUR PARTY-PLANNING FOLDER

As I give suggestions to people just starting out as planners of parties both big and small, I always start off with the very same recommendation: create your party-planning folder. It is a basic tool for planning an event, be it small or large, and the folder works with children’s parties or 80th birthday parties. Start with a folder like any two-pocket folder that can be found at a office supply store. If the party is going to be a larger one, then I like the Poly two-pocket folders with the three-hole punch so that I can bunch them up in a three-ringed binder. It doesn’t matter if you use a Pee-Chee folder or a Top Grain Leather Padfolio Organizer Planner, as long as you have a folder dedicated to keeping track of all of your plans, budgets, orders, and receipts for your party. On our site IlovePartyStyle.com, we have a really cool party planner workbook that can be downloaded and printed with checklists and

sample sheets to get you started on your party-planning folder. The basic information that you will want to keep track of in your party-planning folder is:

1. PARTY PLANNING SHEET: Helps you keep track of all of the important details in one place—the guest list, plans for food and drinks, the to-do list, and more.

2. GIFT TRACKER: This page is to log all of the gifts the star of the party receives, which will make thank-you cards a breeze!

3. ADDRESS AND RSVP PAGE: Keeps a record of all of the addresses for sending out invitations, and allows you to keep track of RSVP responses.

4. GIFT PLANNER: Allows you to plan gifts for birthdays or holidays, helping you keep the budget on track.

5. PARTY PLANNING CHECKLIST: To keep track of the important to-dos!

6. PARTY BUDGET: This worksheet will allow you to create a budget and track expenses for your event.

These five questions will get you started with the party planning. What type of party will it be? When is the date for the party? Where is the ideal location? Who will be invited? How large of a party will it be? I like to call these the “What, When, Where, Who, and How?” party considerations.

A successful party, big or small, will take some planning, and most of that planning will be built on your answers to the five questions above. The answers to those questions will create the overall scope of the event. As you move forward in the planning process, it helps to have a well-defined

image of the party in mind so that you can effectively move through the checklist below.

WHAT

What “type” of party you are planning on hosting is the most important question to answer because it will set the stage for a few of the other considerations. This is where the planning fun begins. If it is a birthday party for a preschooler, your entertainment and activities might be different from the options available for a sweet sixteen party. You can be more creative with party themes for kids in the tween range, age ten to twelve, than you could be for kindergarteners. The tweens would enjoy themes related to blockbuster movies but the pre-k to kindergarten guests would be more comfortable with simple themes like cowboys, pirates, unicorns, or princesses. Another consideration is if the plan is to have the guests participate in activities like pony rides, or if the entertainment will be spectator-based such as a movie.

WHEN

When you will be hosting a party is important to consider as your success will be affected by major holidays, seasonal weather, prime vacation season, and the availability of venues. If you are having a party in May, you will be competing with high school proms for venues. Likewise, in June, there will be competition with weddings for space. Restaurants may be difficult to reserve for holidays like Mother’s Day, Father’s Day, and St. Valentine’s Day. And if your party is in mid-August, the attendance will be affected, since it is the busiest time in the US for family vacations, road trips, and weekend getaways. Also consider the the time of day. How do you want your guests to feel? Is your event going to be quick with a few games and the regular traditions such as gift opening and cake cutting, maybe shoot for an early afternoon party? Do you want your guests to lounge around after the festivities? I think its best to go for a later afternoon party that can turn into a more intimate gathering as the night progresses. The *When* sets the stage for the feeling your guests will experience throughout the party.

WHERE

Where you plan on hosting the party will have some benefits or restrictions inherent with the choice of venue. A party in your backyard or at your apartment complex’s clubhouse will have size limitations that you need to

consider. A party at the local equestrian center or a local park will require weather considerations. If you do plan on hosting an outdoor party, then you will also need to plan a backup location or “Rain Date.” Also, if you are planning an outdoor party, then you should have your initial venue AND the backup plans set before you send out the invitations. If rain or snow will interfere with your plans, then you will need to list the “Rain Date,” but if you can move on with the rain, then list “Rain or Shine” on the invitation.

WHO

Who you plan on hosting will have an effect on the type of party that you can throw. If you are having a coed tween party, then a glamour party may not be the best idea—even if that is what the birthday girl wants. For a party aimed at younger kids, it is also important to consider whom you are hosting since many parents will expect that they get to stay at the party to support their child. This is especially true if this is the birthday party for a preschool-aged or younger child. If this is a party for young children, then you will need to plan on seating, food, and refreshments for a parent per child.

HOW

How big of a party are you planning on having? How many guests? How much would you like to spend on the party? If you multiply the number of guests that will be at the party by how much you plan to spend per guest, then you will have an idea of how large the party is going to be. Create a budget accordingly. If you have it broken down into fixed costs like the venue and variable costs like table settings, you will have a good idea of what you need to cover for each additional guest.



chapter two

DETERMINE YOUR PARTY STYLE

Planning and hosting a memorable party is an adventure in itself. As you embark on this adventure, you are creating an event that reflects your personal style while holding true to the interests and preferences of the guest of honor, the birthday boy or girl. Most birthday parties for young children are thrown by a parent or guardian. As the birthday candles start adding up on the cake, it is more likely that a friend or loved one will throw the party. Either way, the person planning the party has an attachment to the guest of honor and knows them well enough to plan quite a memorable event for the birthday boy or girl. At this point, you need to determine how much of the party is going to reflect your style and how much of it is designed to please the guest of honor. For young kids it is easy, because they will focus more on the theme with their favorite color or their favorite animated movie character and will look past the font used on the party printables. Your party style may be patterned after your favorite party from your youth, or you may lean toward specifically designing and tailoring every detail of a theme to impress the moms of the kids as much as the kids. It is important to define your vision to help solidify the theme of the party.

WHAT'S YOUR PARTY STYLE? TAKE THE QUIZ

- 1. WHICH TERMS WOULD YOUR FRIENDS USE TO DESCRIBE YOU?**
 - A)** Traditional, prim, and proper
 - B)** Sharp, honest, and direct

- C) Fun, playful, and spirited
- D) Relaxed, social, and well-read
- E) Bright, innovative, and forward-thinking

2. WHEN YOU LOOK FOR NEW CLOTHES, WHAT COLOR PALETTE DO YOU SEEK?

- A) Basics, like navy, brown, gray, khaki, or white
- B) Neutrals and blacks
- C) A rainbow of bright colors
- D) Earth tones, tan, brown, olive, rust, and charcoal
- E) Black with touches of bold color

3. WHAT IS YOUR "DREAM-HOME" SETTING LIKE?

- A) Traditional colonial. A separate library and dining room. Fresh flowers from the garden.
- B) Over-sized couches. Mismatched dining chairs. Antique accents and quirky art.
- C) Mansion in the Hamptons. Monogrammed pillows and towels. Blue-and-white striped wallpaper.
- D) Grand staircase. His and hers dressing rooms. Works of craft galore. Furry pillows on your bed.
- E) Modern, clean lines. Simple, open layout with smart controls. Outdoor living spaces.

4. FOR A CASUAL SATURDAY MORNING OUT WITH ANOTHER COUPLE, WHICH WOULD YOU WEAR?

- A) Some comfortable, broken-in khakis, and a collared shirt
- B) A sleek V-neck top and modern-fit straight-leg pant
- C) A fun, casual floral dress or bright mixed prints
- D) A pair of worn chinos and a PETA T-shirt with funky accessories
- E) Your favorite jacket with a plain shirt with a pair of light-indigo jeans

5. WHICH OF THE FOLLOWING BEST DESCRIBES THE DECOR OF YOUR HOME?

- A) Comfortable and traditional (think Ralph Lauren)
- B) Streamlined, tonal, with clean surfaces (think Tom Ford)
- C) Fun, kitschy, and unorthodox (think *Alice in Wonderland*)
- D) Lots of rugs, earth tones, and floral prints (think 70s)
- E) Minimalist, architectural, and sculptural (think modernist, futuristic)

6. YOUR DREAM VACATION WOULD BE

- A) A London getaway. Quick visit to royal palace, Victorian tea time, and maybe a Polo match
- B) Visit a small village. Tour the town with the locals. Sleep at a hostel
- C) Yachting! Gourmet breakfast on the boat, fishing for lunch, strawberries and champagne at sunset
- D) Off to Paris! Chauffeured limousines and an assistant to carry your shopping bags, of course

Anywhere where there are historical and architectural landmarks, art museums, and exotic foods

7. YOUR PREFERRED PJS ARE

- A) A matching set with a button-down top and printed pants
- B) Cute long johns and a loose tee
- C) A simple nightie with a cozy robe
- D) An old white ribbed tank that you stole from your guy and matching panties
- E) A silk & lace set . . . preferably in red

8. WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO MAKEUP ROUTINE?

- A) Pink blush on the cheeks, simple mascara, and curled lashes
- B) A healthy tan and some lip gloss
- C) Soft red lips, fresh skin, and winged eyeliner
- D) Bronzed face with a smoky eye and lip gloss
- E) Minimal and natural, just lips and mascara

9. YOU'RE MEETING YOUR GIRLFRIENDS FOR SUNDAY BRUNCH. YOU WOULD MOST LIKELY WEAR

- A) Colored denim, striped sweater, diamond studs, and your Michael Kors purse
- B) Maxi dress, your vintage denim jacket, boots, and crossover bag
- C) Your favorite jeans, white t-shirt, brown belt, and ballet flats

- D) Leggings, black tank, a leopard-print scarf, and your new YSL pumps
- E) Low-rise jeans, a Silk Crepe Blouse, natural brown oxfords, and a Fold Top Tote bag

10. YOUR FAVORITE NAIL POLISH COLORS ARE

- A) Neutral colors or French tips. They go with everything
- B) No nail polish! That stuff is all chemicals
- C) Red or dark red. Why mess with a good thing?
- D) Wacky designs that you got on your girl's day out with your niece
- E) Depends on what I'm wearing tonight . . .

11. YOUR SIGNATURE ACCESSORIES LOOK IS

- A) My grandmother's pearls and my gold watch
- B) However many pieces I can layer together. No such thing as too many rings
- C) A bracelet my mother gave me and my gold studs
- D) The watch DuJour worn hanging loosely and bangles on the other wrist
- E) Long chandelier earrings and a perfectly matched clutch

12. WHEN YOU WALK INTO A CROWDED ROOM, WHAT WOULD YOU PREFER TO DO?

- A) Blend in
- B) Be in control and exude power

- C) Be animated
- D) Seem natural and easygoing
- E) Make a statement

NOW TALLY UP YOUR CHOICES AND LET'S SEE WHAT YOUR PARTY STYLE APPROACH IS.

IF YOU WERE MOSTLY A'S THEN YOU ARE . . . *Classically Classic*

The Classic Party Host: Someone that loves clean lines, preppy colors, and classic party activities; you will tend to consider the guests and organization over the other aspects of the party.

IF YOU WERE MOSTLY B'S THEN YOU ARE . . . *Over the Top Visionary*

The Visionary Party Host: You are someone that really likes to dig into the décor element and enjoys fresh flowers, live elements, extra details, and plush surroundings. You will tend to consider the décor and unique design over the other aspects of the party.

IF YOU WERE MOSTLY C'S THEN YOU ARE . . . *Party Stylist/DIY*

The DIY Stylist Host: Someone who loves to get crafty with the favors and spends hours looking through printable party packages to see what they can create. They might be obsessed with the Cricket Silhouette and might be planning out custom homemade invitations. You will tend to consider the favors and the sentimental elements more than the other aspects of the party.

IF YOU WERE MOSTLY D'S THEN YOU ARE . . . *Pinning Host*

The Pinning Host: Someone who has created board after board on Pinterest of every amazing party idea and theme and is just waiting to perfectly execute one of the boards full of ideas. You will tend to consider the food and activities more than the other aspects of the party.

IF YOU WERE MOSTLY E'S THEN YOU ARE . . . *Modern Host*

The Modern Host: Someone who thrives on new ideas and original designs. You love the feeling of a space and tend to consider the

environment and the mood more than then the other aspects of the party.





chapter three

MAKE IT MEMORABLE

DETERMINING THE THEME OF YOUR PARTY

Trying to figure out how the party is to look is easier than trying to figure out how you want it to feel. Creating a cowboy theme for your six-year-old son is easy to do, but identifying how the mom of one of his friends feels when she walks in is a secondary part of the theme. Most birthday parties are thrown for the kids but are designed to impress the moms. The cowboy theme could have a cartoon feel, a fifties western feel, a dusty ghost town feel, or a regal and wealthy Bonanza feel, and still look like cowboys to the kids. Finding the ambiance that represents what you want the kids to see as well as what you want the parents to see is part of the big picture that we call the theme. It is important to get it set as a clear guide from the start to make it easier to keep the theme throughout the whole process.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION!

Location, location, location, right? I know that the phrase is a bit overused and it would be cliché if it weren't for the fact that the location is key. First, it is the canvas that your party will be painted on and the backdrop of every memory about the party. Also, it is important to consider that the location you choose needs to be able to host the guests of the party. If you are planning on having 120 kids from your son's school in your backyard that barely has standing room for 60 adults, then you are going to have kids backing up into your house and your neighbor's house. Additionally, with the overcrowding, there will be little free space to see the decorations behind all of the kids standing shoulder to shoulder. So, your location

needs to fit your theme as well as your party. If it doesn't fit your party, then you need to move to a bigger location or reduce the party size. Once you find a venue that fits both the theme and the crowd, you've hit a home run.

You will also have to consider logistics in getting all of the party guests to the location. The venue could be your house, a park, the beach, or a hall, but no matter where you decide to hold it, you need to make sure that the party guests can both travel to and locate the party without too much trouble. More than once, my kids have almost missed a party because I have had to drive in circles to find the exact location of a party at a park or on the beach that was hard to find based on the not-to-scale, hand-drawn map on the invite. This is less of a problem nowadays, with cell phones being so prevalent, but there are occasional issues when the party location is out of cell tower range.

Additionally, if you live in an area where the weather can change in a moment's notice, then you may need to come up with a backup location for the party if the weather will negatively affect the party. If the layout of the outdoor party could reasonably fit in the indoor backup location, then you've planned the backup location well. I recommend that you review the backup with the same layout and adapt the original party plan to make sure that all of the stations will fit and that you have additional backup decorations for the indoor location to keep the theme and to compensate for the lost view of the outdoor setting.

FINDING INSPIRATION

Once the location is secured, you need to work on the artistic details. All great art starts from the tiniest spark of inspiration. Sometimes you have an idea for the look and feel of your party right off the top of your head, but other times you have to look for inspiration. What I have found over the years is that when it doesn't hit you all at once, your best option is to build that inspiration. When looking for an idea for a party for someone that I had known a long time, I thought that creativity would hit me like a lightning strike. But I had a twofold

problem. First, I knew all of the different things that the guest of honor liked and her taste was quite varied. The second issue was that I wanted to do something so special that I kept second-guessing myself and waffling on the design. So I started small by picking her favorite color and thinking of themes that went along with it.



Color is a strong reminder for people; a person's favorite color has a calming, comforting feel. Colors are also the second-strongest memory triggers for people, second only to scents. Starting with your guest of honor's favorite color is a strong foundation to build on. Start with a color palette page in your party-planning folder or notebook. You can use color markers, pantone cards, or paint chips; but you should have a way to show the actual color that you chose. You'll want something that you can physically compare to other colors so that you can visually see the difference as you hold the paint chip up against tablecloths, banners, or paper stock. You will

also want to have this folder handy as you go around taste-testing cakes at bakeries or reviewing venues if you are not hosting at home. The brochures and pricelists from these places can be kept safe and handy in in your party-planning folder. You should keep your cell phone handy as you visit bakeries, venues, party stores, and craft stores so that you can take a quick snapshot of the items that you are interested in. With those pictures on your phone, you will be able to quickly and accurately compare colors, textures, and styles of different products without having to carry them around with you going from store-to-store. After a couple of days, your folder should start to fill out with brochures, invitation samples, fabric swatches, and concept sketches on napkins and real paper. A digital party planner is another way to go. You could list out all of your tasks, orders, and appointments and check them off as you go. You could attach cell phone pictures and store links to vendor websites all on your tablet or smartphone. You can download a party planner from ILovePartyStyle.com for your computer today. As you find inspiration for the party, keep in mind what the guest of honor likes and what is the look and feel that you are hoping to achieve.

Discovering your inspiration is usually a “Eureka!” moment but it is also something that you can build towards by going through some simple exercises. Color matching with paint chips and real world items is a start, but it is not the only way to get your visual muscles working and your creative juices flowing. If you really want to super-charge your creative thought process then, jump on the information highway: the Internet. Many of the sites that most of you frequent now can be your starting block with a few adjustments. As you scroll through Pinterest looking at new homes or dinner recipes and dessert ideas, pin some of them to a board specifically about the party. Pin pictures of the guest of honor in his or her environment as a constant reminder to keep you focused and on the right track. If you refer back to it and compare new items before you pin them to that board, then you are training your mind to focus on what is most important. In no time, you will have a laser-sharp focus on what could possibly be added to the party board and what doesn't belong. As you build up the board, make a point of going through it every week to look for items that may no longer be in line with the party

vision or theme and remove them. The next step would be to use many of the remaining pins to create a trend board for the party in Paint or Photoshop so that you can print it and bring it with you in your party-planning folder.

As you get to the point where you are ready to start a trend board, you should be ready to define what the color palette will be. It is important to be able to nail down two, three, or four colors as the focus for the party. Having the basic colors picked out makes it easier to select or reject decorations, food colors, and props without any second-guessing. The color palette should be used as a “deal breaker” when choosing items to include in your menu or your decorations. If it doesn’t match or compliment the palette, it goes—no questions asked! No hemming, no hawing, since color is either a match or it is not. Yes or no, stay or go, and you will go through your decoration decision list much more quickly!





chapter four

PARTY TIMELINE CHECKLIST

INITIAL PARTY IDEAS—60 OR MORE WEEKS BEFORE

- Considering the guest of honor, choose the size and type of party that you would like to throw.
- Set a date for the party—this seems easy, considering birthdates don't change; but if the birthdate falls on a weekday, you may want to consider a Saturday just before the actual date or right after it. Also, take note of any holidays or school vacations near the date because that will affect attendance.
- Develop your inspiration trend board to keep track of color choices, textures, fonts, and patterns while you choose decorations, cake frosting colors, station components, and supplies
- Decide on a theme, if you want one, keeping in mind what the guest of honor likes—a favorite movie, superhero, toy, or activity. Years ago, party-planning experts would have placed this step further on in the process, but now it is the driving force behind much of the theme-coordinated items from the invitations to the thank-you cards and everything in between. Establish the theme as early as possible to get all of the related items coordinated and lined up.
- Decide the size of the party. The total number of people invited will determine location choices, food preparation, seating, and budget. The earlier you decide on the size of the party, the earlier you can develop the scope of the party.

NEXT PARTY PLANNING STEPS—5 WEEKS BEFORE

- Draft a preliminary guest list.
- Design and/or order the invitations and thank-you notes if you will be mailing out printed invites.
- Address and stamp the envelopes for the invitations.
- Mail invitations to out-of-town guests so they can make travel plans.
- Review themed party printables at sites such as www.ilovepartystyle.com.
- List the printables that will need to be downloaded from the printable site. Cover everything that you'll need for the party—from food dish labels for food stations and menu cards to cupcake toppers and water bottle wrappers.
- Start pricing out the cost of the food, decorations, venue costs, entertainment, rentals, photographer, and party favors. Then, with those cost estimates, create a budget for the party. Set appointments with bakers for taste testing and review cake designs if you are purchasing a custom ordered cake.
- Based on the size of the party, start creating a scope of the party by listing out all of the desired items for the party from food to entertainment. Meet with the florist to discuss the floral decorations if you will be using flower arrangements in the party decoration.

NEXT PARTY PLANNING STEPS—4 WEEKS BEFORE

- Finalize the guest list.
- Mail or email out the invitations to the local guests.
- Plan the menu.
- Plan the food preparation—from securing the appropriate recipes and purchasing the ingredients to making

appointments for taste tests and samplings at restaurants for items that you are not going to prepare.

- Make a list of how far in advance each food dish can be made and compile a shopping list. Plan out the dishes.
- Place the respective orders with your local delicatessen, bakery, restaurant, or flower shop as needed.
- Plan out the serving and food presentation—from purchasing table linens, flatware, platter, cake plates, and candy dishes to hiring servers if desired.
- Prepare any food items that can be frozen.

NEXT STEPS—3 WEEKS BEFORE

- Purchase any sodas, sports drinks, bottled water, packaged snacks, candies, and any items for the favor bags.
- If the party is a potluck, or if friends have offered to bring food for the party, coordinate what dishes will be made by whom to avoid overlaps.
- Line up any help you may need. Consider hiring a friend's high-school-aged son or daughter, or even hire a professional to help with pre-party cleaning, post-party cleaning, or to bus tables and to serve drinks or appetizers. It would be better to have a helper that is not emotionally invested in the success of the party, as grandparents, cousins, aunts, or uncles may want to participate in the festivities with the guest of honor more than would a neighbor's son would.

NEXT STEPS—2 WEEKS BEFORE

- Plan out the party food, snack, cake, and drink stations and draw up a layout. Use your layout and create an actual floor plan for you party space. You can use browser apps to help such as “Floorplanner,” “Roomstyler,” and “Autodesk

Homestyler”; all of these apps and more can be found on Google at chrome.google.com/webstore.

- Set up a mock party based on your floor plan complete with a food station and cake station to double-check on serving and presentation items as well as your supply of dessert plates, utensils, and additional flatware. Also take note on what decorations will go where, taking pictures with your cell phone to remind you of what you had planned when you had plenty of time and were not rushed.
- Prepare printables and creating party favor bags for the guests.
- Clear out the refrigerator to make room for the new food coming in for the party and take note of condiments on hand that will be needed for the party.
- Plan out and purchase ingredients for the recipes for items that can keep for a week or more.
- Purchase the remaining non-perishable foods.
- Create a playlist of songs to play. If you are hiring a DJ or entertainment, share your wish-list playlist with them

NEXT STEPS—1 WEEK BEFORE

- Sort the recipes out based on what should be made first and what needs to be made at the last minute.
- Prepare the dishes that can keep for a week or more.
- Plan out the number of plates, bowls, cups, and serving dishes needed to support the amount of food that you will have at the party.
- Call or email those invitees that failed to respond with an RSVP.
- Any table linens and cloth napkins should be ironed.
- Clean the house or schedule the cleaning service.

- Set the stage—start staging for the party by arranging the furniture and by removing the things that will be in the way, broken, or taken.
- Send out a thank-you email to those that have offered to make food or have volunteered to help out and restate what it was that each person had committed to as a reminder.
- Lay out decorations and count for the coverage that you desire. If you run up short, plan an additional trip to the craft store for supplies.
- Create final guest list with the head count broken down by boys and girls and adults. This will ensure that the final setup is adequate for the expected number of guests.

NEXT STEPS—4 OR 5 DAYS BEFORE

- Purchase cheese platters if you are going to entertain parents as well as children.
- Polish the silver and clean crystal or china serving ware.
- Purchase the non-perishable foods.
- Notify the neighbors of the party that you will be entertaining children who may make a lot of noise.
- Set up a coat check station with a cleared-out closet or a rolling rack and hangers.
- Set up the clean-up station and supply it with baby wipes and hand sanitizer for the kiddies and Wine-Away (the wine stain remover), club soda, and Tide sticks for the adults.

NEXT STEPS—2 DAYS BEFORE

- Remove frozen food items from the freezer and place them in the refrigerator to defrost overnight.
- Any cloth napkins should be folded or placed in napkin holders and boxed in preparation for the table setting.

- Based on your floor plan, sort and order the decorations for your party location from one end of the room to the other. Stack decorations for the food station in one pile, decorations for the drink station in another, the gift table decorations in a third stack, and party favor station decorations in another stack. Then go in reverse order around the room and place the decorations in a box. As you go in reverse order, the first section that you will be decorating will be on the top of the pile in the box and the last section's decorations will be at the bottom of the box. You can start at one end of the room and put up decorations and then move to the next section and then the next and before you know it the room is decorated in half the time.

NEXT STEPS—1 DAY BEFORE

- Tables can be set up, including the table linens, centerpieces, and the place-settings for the guests including flatware, cloth napkins, and name cards if you are having assigned seating.
- Grab the decoration box that you packed the day before and go to town putting up decorations. Start at one end of the location and work down the line to the other end.
- Purchase flowers for arrangements and settings if a florist isn't arranging them. Make sure that there is room enough to refrigerate them or at least that there is good air conditioning. During the hottest months this task may be best completed at the crack of dawn on the day of the party at the local farmers market—or have the flowers delivered the day of, since flowers don't last well in the heat.
- Put up decorations. If you are in a venue, this may be outside of the venue's option and you will have to do this day of the event. If so, place your decorations as the first step in prepping day of.

FINAL STEPS—4 OR MORE HOURS BEFORE

- Place the settings and flower arrangements on the tables and stations.
- Set up the food stations with party trays covered with cellophane to be peeled off just before the party starts.
- Set up the drink stations with drinks, cups, and straws.
- Place ice in drink tubs to chill the drinks before the party starts.
- Set up the dessert station with plates, forks and spoons, and napkins.

FINAL STEPS—1 HOUR BEFORE

- Finish all of the perishable food preparation.
- Put ice in the appropriate food stations.
- Remove refrigerated food items and place them at their food station.
- Place hors d'oeuvres on serving trays ready to be served.
- Final walk through of the party area.

You've Just Finished your Free Sample

Enjoyed the preview?

Buy: <http://www.ebooks2go.com>