



# An affair to remember

Want your party to be the soiree of the season? Michelle Bateman asks the professionals for tips on hosting an unforgettable event.

**H**ot days, long nights, one year ending and another one starting afresh. There are plenty of reasons why summer is officially party season, a time when invitations jostle for space in an already crowded diary. Naturally, throwing the ultimate party requires the best of everything.

"I don't ever want a party to be just about the flowers or just about the table or the food, they should all coexist with the guest list," says leading Sydney caterer and event organiser John Wilson, "And at the end of the day, if you get the guest list wrong, you are totally stuffed."

The key to a good guest list? "Handsome men and beautiful women help," admits PR guru and event planner Mark Patrick. Also, be brutally honest when assessing close friends and don't invite people who don't get along, as it will only create tension. After that, the power is in the mix.

"I love it when you really mix people, say a banker with a journalist, with an artist, with a fashion designer, with a chef. Otherwise, the table tends to get stuck in a rut talking about one thing," Patrick says.

For Naomi Parry, whose marketing and PR consultancy, Black Communications, has worked on big-ticket events for Veuve Clicquot, Paspaley Pearls and Krug, among other luxury brands, planning a party always begins with a fabulous idea, which has its first expression in a standout invitation.

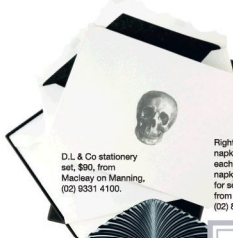
"Do something to tantalise, it's the first moment of engagement and if people arrive excited, your party is already three-quarters of the way there."

Things that will tantalise: heavy, lined envelopes; customised stationery; beautiful calligraphy. Things that won't: poor spelling; emailed invitations.

"If you're going to go to the trouble and expense of having a party, you should think about creating an experience that people have never had before," says Parry.

"That might be their first glass of Krug or thousands of candles in a room or an exquisite piece of music. If the party is to celebrate you, you're the brand in that sense, and it should be about you and what makes you special."

MATTHEW SHAWE, YIANNI ASPRODAKIS, GUY BAILEY STYLED BY VANESSA ANTONIOUS; ADAM KHOURY, MAKEUP BY AMANDA WRIGHT AT MANDY COAKLEY; USING DICOR; MANICURE BY LEIGHTON DENNY AT MY MANAGEMENT; USING CHANEL; PROP STYLING: WEBSTER + STOKES; MODEL: LISA O'MAND AT STORM; SEE BUTLINES FOR DETAILS AND STYLISTS



D.L. & Co stationary set, \$90, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

Right: Belgian linen napkins, \$16.45 each, and horn napkin rings, \$69 for set of four, all from Becker Minty, (02) 8356 9999.

## THE DINNER PARTY TO DIE FOR

Planning a dinner party is all about scale, so think big — especially with decorating. On the table, try sculpture, unexpected objects (Mark Patrick suggests large branches covered in crystals), even mirrors to reflect a beautiful ceiling.

Also think laterally when dressing the table. Parry suggests using a length of furnishing fabric as a cloth — it's a nifty way to incorporate seasonal trends, such as this summer's florals. For Patrick, if your table is good enough — for this, read designer — there's no need to cover it at all when Hermès placemats will do nicely. Both agree that coloured crystal water glasses, such as those by Nachtmann, are having a moment and look fantastic against an otherwise neutral table.

And the dinner service? "Printed plates are gorgeous, like the collection Jasper Conran has just done for Waterford Wedgwood," says Patrick. "A lot of people made the mistake of buying those big curved plates and when you put your knife and fork on them, they fall in. Everyone gets freaked out when that happens because they're all trying to be push at the table and they're picking up [their cutlery] and it's covered in jus. So the flat plate is back."

John Wilson — nominated by many as the host of some of the most enjoyable dinner parties in Sydney — keeps coming back to one slightly unexpected word: nourishing.

"I'm quite delicate in that I'll serve food that is first and foremost nourishing because most people who live their lives between fourth and fifth gear don't actually get lots of fresh vegetables," he says. "So I'll do lots of vegetables, without it being the hessian-underpants-type vegetable food."

And Wilson has another N-word up his sleeve. "I try to put a little bit of nostalgia in the food. I think roast chicken is completely underrated and that's maybe what people want to eat."

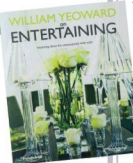
If this sounds radical in its simplicity, then that's the point. When eating out sometimes means — as Wilson puts it — "Getting a tomato that's been diced and spread over 25 people's plates", serving something more traditional at home can actually be quite refreshing.

Sean Connolly from Sydney's Astral Restaurant also likes "really simple food with a bit of bling in it", such as caviar followed by roast beef with Yorkshire pudding and foie gras.

The other benefit of simple food done well is that it allows you to spend more time with your guests, which, really, is the whole point. "You need to provide an ambience where people feel, when they're talking to you, that they are the only person in the room, that you're completely focused," says Wilson. And it suggests that if you're entertaining more than 15 people, having waitstaff on hand is a must.

Nachtmann serving plate, \$59.95, from The Essential Ingredient, (03) 9827 9047.

William Yeoward on *Entertaining*, by William Yeoward, \$77 (Oico Books), from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.



## EXPERT TIP

Stylist Kirsten Bookallil (she styled the interiors for our Jodhi Meares story in *BAZAAR's* October 2006 issue) shares her picks for flowers this season. "For something dramatic, play with colours and don't be afraid to have them clash. For a more exotic look, cluster a number of vases together and fill them with a range of flowers."

And Bookallil's top florists?

- Mandalay Flowers, 6 Cross Street, Double Bay, New South Wales, (02) 9362 5000.
- Phoebe Stephens, Shop 6 Centro on James, 31 James Street, Fortitude Valley, Queensland, (07) 3216 0443.

Garden-style posy from Mandalay Flowers, from \$40 per bunch, (02) 9362 5000.



Nachtmann plate, \$49.95, from The Essential Ingredient, (03) 9827 9047.

Delamain Pale & Dry Cognac XO, \$135, from Dan Murphy, 1300 723 388.



Prada dress, \$2790, (02) 9231 3929.



Louis Vuitton top, \$2640, 1300 883 880.



Bulgari High Jewellery Collection yellow gold, diamond, emerald, mother-of-pearl necklace, price on application, (02) 9233 3611.

Jasper Conran for Waterford Wedgwood plates, \$100 each, from Myer, 1800 811 611.



Versace shoes, approximately \$1495, (02) 9267 3232.



Ben Edele goblets, from \$180 each, from a selection at Courtesy Of The Artist, (02) 9380 9499.



Nachtmann tumblers, \$130 each, from The Bay Tree, (02) 9328 1101.



Limoges breakfast cup and saucer, \$180, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

Tom Binns necklace, \$1620, from Parour X, (02) 9331 0999.

Anna Torfa flat bowl, \$1325, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

Yves Saint Laurent cuff, approximately \$1056, from a selection at www.ysl.com.

Wheels & DollBaby cress, \$363, (02) 9361 3286.

John Rocha for Waterford Crystal Black Cut wine glass, \$220 per pair, and Black Cut votive candle holder, \$175, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

Vintage Waterford Crystal glasses, price on application from De Mille, (03) 9663 9666.

Bollinger Special Cuvée, \$79, from Kennerly's, 13 88 81.

Djafer placemats, \$295, and coasters, \$185, from Becker Minty, (02) 8356 9999.

## THE COCKTAIL PARTY THAT DAZZLES

A successful cocktail party is all about variety and a knack for good timing. Mark Patrick suggests setting up two bars — one that serves champagne and wine, and the other for cocktails — to which guests are directed on arrival. This helps to get people moving through different spaces, rather than huddling around a drinks waiter.

"Half the people will go for champagne and half for a cocktail, so you immediately divide the room up and people start to mix." Serve canapés too late at your party, laughs Naomi Parry. "I've learned from experience that the timing of canapés is critical because if you feed people too late, they're so drunk that they decide they can't be bothered eating. If you get something to them early, then you can traif off a little."

Parry likes to have about 10 canapé options. Astrair's Sean Connolly goes with three cold and five hot, such as mini lobster burgers with mango salsa followed by goat's cheese croquettes. "Never go back into cold foods after hot foods: people just don't eat it," he cautions.

For entertainment, bands are nixed — "too intrusive" — in favour of DJs. "A good DJ reads the room and takes control of the mood," says Naomi Parry. "They start with nice easy, light music as people walk in and then as people start to get into the mood, they ramp it up. A good DJ can take you on a journey and are particularly perfect for cocktail parties. I think they're make or break."

Celebrity DJ Ruby Rose agrees, noting that a good playlist should move smoothly from one genre to the next. "Group similar music together and start with slower music at the beginning and then work your way up," Rose suggests.



Roberto Cavalli clutch bag, price on application, from a selection at Cosmopolitan Shoes, (03) 9382 0510.



Riviera tray, \$695, from Becker Minty, (02) 8356 9999.

Bombay Sapphire gin, \$41, from Kennerly's 13 88 81



Orchids, from \$8 per bloom, Begonia leaves, \$5 each, vase, for hire only, all from Garlands, (02) 9357 7900.



## Sounds of summer

Sneaky Sound System producer Angus McDonald puts together his ultimate cocktail-party playlist, exclusively for BAZAAR:

- Kids, MGMT
- *A Sence of Sorts in Kongsvinger, Of Montreal*
- *Golden Cage, The Whitest Boy Alive*
- *Boys Don't Cry, The Cure*
- *Easy Lover, Phil Collins and Phil Bailey*
- *No Fit State, Hot Chip*
- *Girlfriend Is Better, Talking Heads*
- *Only Shooting Love, Time Bandits*
- *Hold On, Holy Ghost!*
- *Taken It All, Zoot Woman*
- *Town Called Malice, The Jarn*
- *Like To Get To Know You Well, Howard Jones*

MATTHEW SHAW, YVANN ASPARAKIS; GUY BAILEY, STYLED BY VANESSA ANTONIOUS; ADAM HOLY; MAKEUP BY AMANDA WRIGHT AT MANDY COMBELEY; LINDA DOP; MANICURE BY LIGIHO DUNN AT MANDY COMBELEY; HAIR: WISSEY; STYLING: WISSEY; LUG: GARDNER AT USHAG; SEE BUYLINES FOR DETAILS AND STOCKISTS



La Plage deckchair, \$295, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.



Pearly roses, from \$28 a bunch, and platter, \$230, from Garlands, (02) 9357 7900.

Polo Club cushions, \$105 each, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

Salad servers, \$145, from Becker Minty (02) 8356 9999.

Hermès blankets, \$1120 (orange) and \$1445 (grey and white), (02) 9287 3200.



Outdoor lantern, \$89.95, from Garlands, (02) 9357 7900.



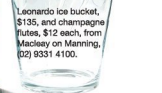
French basket, \$46, from Simon Johnson, (02) 9328 6888.



Louis Vuitton shoes, \$1180, 1300 863 880.



Innocent Bystander Moscato, \$11.95, 1800 661 624.



Leonardo ice bucket, \$135, and champagne tutes, \$12 each, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.

## DRINKS RECIPE

Barry Chalmers, consultant to Brisbane's award-winning bar The Bowers, likes a simple punch that can be mixed at home. His Suffering the Storm (and by the grace of the gods, it will be the only storm suffered on the day) requires 300ml Pampero Especial rum, 100ml freshly pressed lime juice, 150ml orange (almond) syrup, 200ml fresh orange juice and 20 drops Angostura bitters. Mix it in a bottle, pour over ice and top with Bundaberg ginger beer.



Just Cavalli top, \$1227, (03) 9827 4632.



sabb via by sass & bode shorts, \$170, (02) 9687 1667.



Jimmy Choo shoes, \$1100, (02) 8666 0606.

## THE VERY BEST BARBECUE

They're casual and spontaneous so if you're going to take a few risks with entertaining, then the barbecue is the occasion to do it. Experiment with different types of food, says Kim Terakes, the guru of the grill who runs the Boys Can Cook culinary school. "Basically, there's not a cuisine that you can't translate to the barbecue. You can do Japanese teppanyaki and yakitori; the whole range of American dishes; all those great Cajun dishes; all the Mediterranean dishes such as simple grilled sliced vegetables," he says. "The more confident you get, the more fun you can have. I like doing a twist on moussaka, with some lamb steaks, eggplant and tomato slices and a parmesan-based béchamel sauce. I think you can explore all flavors."

For something more traditional, renowned seafood chef Greg Doyle from Sydney's Pier, riffs on the Australian fondness for seafood by starting with seared squid before moving on to lobster medallions with a broccolini, fennel and parmesan salad. Dessert is done on the barbie, too – Doyle suggests poaching nectarines or peaches, dusting them with sugar and lightly grilling before serving with sorbet or granita.

The flip side of all this casual spontaneity is that barbecues are generally at the whim of the elements, and Wilson suggests always having a wet-weather option, "which is more than just having those clear ponchos that you get from Bunnings".

Naomi Parry agrees that when entertaining outdoors, the comfort of your guests is a top priority. "You can word them up beforehand, but people will still arrive wearing Manolo Blahniks to go on the sand. Make sure there are places for them to be warm or cool so that you can make the most of that outdoor setting because really, it's the ultimate. In Australia, you'd like to have every party outdoors."



Matches, \$8 a box, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.



Eva Solo table grill, \$495, from Macleay on Manning, (02) 9331 4100.



Willow top, \$519 (02) 9281 7355. Villa Maria Private Bin Sauvignon Blanc, \$20, from www.auswine.com.au



Escada bag, \$1695, (02) 9223 3283.



Salvatore Ferragamo sunglasses, \$320, (02) 9221 3036.