

# A GATSBY NEW YEAR



## Invitations

Once you've finalized the guest list and picked a theme, prepare the invites. Formal affairs deserve customized, personal invitations. While evites are acceptable, they're hardly memorable. Guests duly note a well-crafted invite. It's a gesture that separates party throwing from hosting. When composing the invite, address guests personally and identify any theme and attire requirements. Specify service times if a sit down dinner will be served.

Professionally designed invites are unforgettable. Almost every computer has a customizing option so that you can prepare your own. Make sure your timing is accurate and the party theme is front and center. If it is an outdoor party, consider late night themes that accommodate weather sensitivities.

**Advice from the party planner:** Renown entertaining goddess, Katie Brown, advises serving dinner in a timely manner. "It is inappropriate to have your guests arrive and

wait hours for their meal," she says. "Serve dinner within 30-45 minutes of their arrival."

## Menu

Give guests their just desserts with an exceptional menu. Whether providing a formal meal, catered hors d'oeuvres or a deluxe potluck dinner, your next courses of action will be to create a menu that properly reflects the party's theme and season. For example, a typical Gatsby dinner might include a Waldorf salad, steak with a mushroom sauce, and potatoes with a side of hollandaise. Stock the bar with cocktail basics: vodka, scotch, rum, whiskey, tequila, lime and tomato juices, and "Bathtub Gin," of course. Have a selection of wine and beer on tap, sodas for underage guests, and plenty of bottled water. Other top-shelf accents: orange juice, green olives, cherries and lime. For a Gatsby party, consider setting up a period soda fountain.

**Advice from the party planner:** Be the host with the most. Think about service and seating. "Avoid heavy-handed management," Brown advises. "Don't force introductions or conversations. Parties should flow organically. Let surprises happen."

## Scene Stealer

Décor is essential for creating the perfect party atmosphere and should complement the party's theme without overwhelming it. Haul out your

linens, fine glassware and flatware for a Gatsby affair. Go speakeasy chic or casino royale. Klaff suggests running silent movies in the background for an added touch (think Cagney and Chaplin). Make sure that live entertainment or recorded music is period appropriate.

**Advice from the party planner:** Brown insists that atmosphere is the life of the party. "Pay attention to mood. Think about the music, lighting and where you're placing the food throughout the house so that the party flows and the guests have a place to land."

## Party Favors

A small, thoughtful gift creates a lasting impression and is a memorable thank you. Consider taking individual photos with your guests or hiring a videographer to chronicle the occasion. Give the framed mementos or DVDs as gifts at your next holiday party!

The most important party consideration is a responsible send-off. "You are responsible for your guests not drinking and driving," Klaff says. "Make sure they have a safe way to get home." •

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*Party planner advice adapted from Katie Brown's online tips. For a comprehensive guide to entertaining, read Katie Brown Entertains or download all her tips at [www.katiebrown.com](http://www.katiebrown.com). Visit [Elegant Events online](http://ElegantEvents.com) at [www.eleganteventsbymichelle.com](http://www.eleganteventsbymichelle.com)*