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how-to

guide

WAYS TO PLAN YOUR WEDDING WITH EASE

Centerpieces made by blending birch and ranunculus with lollipops (from Hammonds Candies) and paper cones of ranunculus, \$400, by Kim Hirst for Michelle Rago Ltd. Tables, chairs, china, crystal and flatware from Party Rental Ltd. Linens from Magnolias Linens. Place cards, \$60 for 10; table numbers, \$18 each, both by Karen Badolomei for Grapevine. Calligraphy throughout by Xandra Y. Zamora of XYZ Ink.

Throw a Bridal Shower

It's a party in your honor that you don't have to plan. Sweet! But that doesn't mean you can't make things a little easier on your hosts by letting them know what you have in mind. So read on for planning tips, creative theme ideas, fun favors and more.

WRITER: Anita K. Henry EDITOR: Linda Hirst



Penny-candy jars, \$11 each, from Anchor Hocking. Scoops, \$2.50 each, from Sur la Table. Ribbon from Making Memories. Chrome "Over the Sink" shelf, \$11.50, from Essential Home. "Valentine" ribbon candy and short wooden barber poles from Hammonds Candies. All other candy from Dylan's Candy Bar. Invitation, \$180 for 10; seating cards, \$40 for 10 (\$3 additional for calligraphy), all by Karen Bartolomei for Grapevine.

Pick Your Theme

Once you've chosen a theme, you've set the stage for everything that follows, from your invitations to your menu to your favors.

CANDY LAND

Top your tables with bouquets of oversized lollipops and bowls of bright, colored candy. Place a gourmet candy bar at each guest's place setting. Offset the sweets with some savory treats like ice cream-cone and lollipop-shaped hors d'oeuvres and trays of light sandwiches, mixed fruit, and garden and pasta salads.

GARDEN PARTY

Celebrate nature by holding the shower in a friend's backyard. Tuck blossoms and sprigs of lavender into the napkin folds. Serve fresh-from-the-garden food

such as seasonal vegetables, herbed grilled chicken and sun-kissed iced tea.

AFTERNOON TEA

It's girly and grown-up all at the same time. Lace linens with floral accents are perfect for the tables. Borrow china from friends to create an eclectic mix of cups and saucers. Serve finger sandwiches, scones with jam and clotted cream, petits fours and, of course, tea.

FILM FESTIVAL

Choose classic movies as inspiration for your table decor (*Pretty in Pink*, *Casino*, etc.) and see if guests can guess the

lick. Hot dogs, chicken fingers and french fries give a nod to the concession stand along with mini boxes of Junior Mints and Milk Duds, and bags of popcorn.

WINE AND CHEESE TASTING

Hold your shower at a local winery or turn a home into a tasting room. Set up wine and cheese stations throughout your space, and include brief description cards next to the selections. Lunch can include salads topped with grilled chicken or steak and roasted vegetables. Consider ice cream parfaits served in wineglasses for a sweet ending.

Make a Guest List and Mail Invites

1. Include all of the bridesmaids and both the bride's and groom's moms, aunts and grandmothers on the list.
2. Ask about friends, co-workers, other relatives and friends of the groom.
3. Follow the wedding guest list. No one should be invited to the shower who isn't going to be asked to the wedding.
4. Send invitations approximately six weeks in advance.
5. Insert a map with directions to the party's locale and a complete list of where the bride is registered.
6. Note anything special you'd like guests to bring (photos, recipes, etc.).