

By Rebecca Ford, an eHow Contributor

updated July 06, 2011

Preparing for an Engagement Party

Save the Stress for the Actual Wedding



The party should reflect the couple -- and it doesn't need to be expensive.(photo: Polka Dot Images/Polka Dot/Getty Images)

Planning an engagement party doesn't have to induce stress -- you'll have plenty of opportunities to stress out planning your wedding. An engagement party, which usually happens three to four months after the proposal, should be a joyous affair, celebrating the future union of two lovebirds and giving in-laws a chance to meet each other for the first time. It can also be a potentially expensive affair. You can make the party affordable by knowing tricks of the trade.

Remembering that your engagement party

*Remembering
that your
engagement
party is just
the appetizer
to a bigger
feast ahead is*

is just the appetizer to a bigger feast ahead is the key to a successful party. Amy Malin, founder of Trueheart Events, an entertainment marketing firm in Los Angeles, agrees that less is more when it comes to engagement parties.

the key to a successful party.

— Amy Malin, event planner

"Your wedding should be viewed as your main event and the time when you and your fiance go all out, so do not feel pressured to keep up with the Joneses when it comes to your engagement party," she said.

Location, Location, Location

The first step for any party is finding a location, and with engagement parties, options abound. "You can host your engagement party in your own backyard, at a restaurant, nightclub, bar, lounge, hotel rooftop, park or beach," said Malin.

Hosting the party at a home --- either yours or a friend's --- can save you money and allow for more personalization. Malin suggests adding personal touches to whichever location you choose, including photos of you and your fiance.

It's important to spend some time doing a walk-through of the location, says Greg Jenkins, partner and co-founder of Bravo Productions, an event-planning, design and production company in Long Beach, California

"For example, if hosted at a private residence or backyard, you'll want to see where the sun might be during the time of the event," Jenkins said. "Are there trees that are budding or could attract unwanted insects? Will your guests be exposed to the direct sun, resulting in the need to provide some type of shade or tenting?"

An Engagement Party Checklist

Three Months Before the Party:

Pick a date and secure a location for the event.

Figure out a theme for your event. Will it be a casual backyard barbecue or a semi-casual garden party? Also determine if there is a cultural theme you'd like to use.

Prepare your guest list. Decide if this will be a large or small event. Ensure all guests on this list will also be invited to the wedding and reception.

Decide whether to register. Some couples register for the event, while others do not. Event planner Amy Malin suggests not putting your gift registration on the invitation because it can seem formal and tacky. Friends can always ask family members where the couple is registered.

Two Months Before the Party:

Eat, Drink and Be Merry

Once you have picked a location, decide on a theme for your event. It's always fun to use this theme in the decorations and even the food choices for the event.

"For example, if the bride has a personality of 'hot and spicy' and the groom 'reserved and aloof,' a menu can be put together that reflects both hot and cold, displayed nicely with inexpensive fabric and fruit," Jenkins said.

He emphasizes that the food choices should reflect the type of crowd that will attend; for example, don't serve caviar to a "meat and potatoes" crowd. In the same vein, have fun with the menu but be sure the crowd will enjoy the food. Jenkins also suggests using seasonal vegetables and fruits to make the meal feel fresh and fun, while also saving on the expenses that out-of-season produce would incur.

Another easy way to save money is to limit your beverage choices. Malin suggests creating a "signature" cocktail to serve.

"Come up with a drink which you can name after you and your fiancée, or something having to do with your engagement or relationship which would be a crowd pleaser for everyone," said

Plan a menu. Also make drink and dessert decisions. Make sure to have vegetarian options available.

Send invitations.

Plan games or events. Make a basic outline for the event. Will there be a time for toasts? Games? Leave some time for the hosts and bride and groom to mingle with their guests.

Select decorations. No need to go overboard with decorations, but select items that reflect your theme and the couple.

Week of the Event:

Do a walk-through at the location to make sure the light and ambiance is right. Make sure there is plenty of seating and that the lawn is cut.

Ask for help. Get family members to help with the final arrangements if necessary

Day of the Event:

Enjoy yourself!

Malin. Offer that signature cocktail, along with nonalcoholic options such as soda, juice and water.

Once the location, date and theme of the event are set, it's important to send out "Save the Date" cards, especially if guests will be traveling from out of town. Party planners notice that many people now are using electronic Save the Dates and invitations for the engagement party, which saves both money and paper.

Creating Memories

One of the most memorable events of the engagement party is the toasts, Malin says.

"In order to avoid potentially embarrassing situations while also being mindful of your guests' short attention spans, limit the number of people making toasts and carefully select whom you'd like to make toasts," said Malin. Avoiding giving an ex-boyfriend the mic, for example.

You can save money by asking a talented photographer friend to take the photos. The same can be done with video.

The most important goal, Malin says, is to ensure the future bride and groom get to enjoy the party they worked hard to plan.



"Keep it simple and remember to be a guest at your own party so you and your fiancée aren't running around stressed out when you should be enjoying yourselves and basking in the glow of your engagement," said Malin.

Photo Credit Polka Dot Images/Polka Dot/Getty Images;

Resources

[Trueheart Events](#)

[Bravo Productions](#)



Related Ads

[Event Planning](#)

[Engagement](#)

[Party Planners](#)

[Event Planner](#)

[Party Catering](#)

[Wedding Planner](#)

Related Articles & Videos



Protocol for Engagement Parties



Writing Engagement Party Invitations



How to Plan Activities for a Stag Party



How to Organize Engagement Party



Bridal Engagement Gifts



How to Prepare a Wedding Engagement Dinner Menu

More ▼