

Celebrate with Style™



Family & Friends

Girls' Night In

By Karin Greenberg

It's easier than you might think to create a great personal party theme. Caterer and event planner Kelven Book of Canard, Inc., in Manhattan, offers his Rule No.1: "Find out what the person really enjoys."

When the husband of a New York socialite hired Book to "do something special" for his wife's 40th birthday, Book spoke at length with his client to glean as much information as possible about the wife's interests. "I learned that the guest of honor adores the 1950s, is crazy about designer handbags, and loves to be pampered. So I suggested a '50s-era 'Girls' Night In.'"

The party wasn't a secret, but some of the details were kept under wraps, to add an element of surprise. Guests were invited to dress in styles popular in the '50s. And the guest of honor was asked to keep busy outside her Park Avenue apartment on event day so Book and his staff could set up.

A MIX OF THEMED ELEMENTS

The night began with a seated dinner for 20 of her closest girlfriends. Among the guests were women who had been friends since childhood and others who had become friends through their kids' relationships at school or because the women worked together on charity events.

Book chose a pink-and-white color scheme to create a traditional "girlish" look. Dinner was served at a large wooden table, with rented chairs to accommodate the entire group. Plain white rented dishes were mixed with the hostess's heirloom flatware. Book also purchased sophisticated checked placemats in pale pink, ivory, and white to match the white linen napkins the hostess already owned.

Floral arrangements consisted of fragrant pink peonies displayed in vintage ivory-colored Fiestaware drinking glasses from the host's collection.

The menu, chosen to be light and humorously reflective of the era, included prosciutto-wrapped asparagus, cherry tomato BLTs and grilled flounder served with sautéed green beans. Waiters dressed formally, in white dinner jackets with white shirts, black slacks, and black ties.

The biggest burst of culinary creativity, however, was saved for dessert. Because the guest of honor was, as Book puts it, "quite the handbag aficionada," he hired an extraordinary pastry chef to create cakes designed to look like some of the handbags in the woman's designer collection.

All of the cakes were chocolate, he says. However, the pastry chef used both butter cream and fondant icings, and created details such as flowers and the classic Chanel logo by using piped royal icing, gum paste, and marzipan.

And for fun? Book brought in three energetic hair and makeup stylists who provided the women with mini-glamour boosts while playing '50s music and promoting fun gossip. The net result, he says, is that the guest of honor and her friends thoroughly enjoyed what he calls "the sleepover atmosphere."

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