

Take the party outside

With enough planning, the right equipment and good dose of creativity, you can transform your backyard bash from plain to pizzazz.

“Outdoor entertaining is about making your guests feel comfortable and special, and there are a variety of innovative ways to do that,” says Sebastien Centner, head of Eatertainment Special Events and Catering, which operates nationwide.

Weather-proofing is key to successful outdoor parties, Centner says, and he advises to be prepared for anything.

For example, he says, if using lit candles as part of your decor, make sure they're windproof. Weigh down napkins so they stay in place on the table. Have a few blankets or pashminas on hand for guests to use if they get chilly.

“Always do a rain plan,” Centner adds. “As much as the entertainment is focused on the outside, what happens if you have to move it indoors? Where do you put the antipasto station and the bar? Plan for the worst, but hope for the best.”

Another tool to protect guests against the elements, Centner says, is to prepare a host basket filled with convenience items such as sunglasses, flip-flops, sunscreen, bug repellent and misting spray.

“When you're entertaining outside on a hot August day, some people may show up unprepared. It's nice to have these small essentials available for them in a stylish basket. People are going to remember that about your party,” he says.

Umbrellas and tents that cover eating areas are also ideal for protecting against the sun, he says, adding that many of today's models are also very stylish.

The kind of patio furniture you use and how you arrange it can go a long way in helping guests enjoy themselves and engage with each other.

Using just traditional patio sets that seat six to eight around a table, Centner says, is less conducive to natural socializing than having a variety of small seating areas.

— Sharon Aschaiek, FOR 24 HOURS



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