



[Rana Florida](#)

CEO, The Creative Class Group & Author, Upgrade

Upgrade Your Spring Parties: 10 Expert Tips for Entertaining (PHOTOS)

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An [equinox](#) occurs twice a year, when the earth is tilted neither toward nor away from the sun, giving us exactly 12 hours of sunlight and 12 hours of night. This year, the [Spring Equinox](#) falls on March 20th. As the days grow longer and we leave our winter blues further and further behind, our thoughts naturally turn to rebirth, rejuvenation, renewal and regrowth. So what better time is there to celebrate in style?

In honor of the first day of spring, I've gathered some key tips on how you can upgrade your springtime festivities. Whether entertaining a small group of friends at home or planning a major event, these simple style, design and culinary insights offer just what you need to make any occasion that much more special.

Here's how you can *Upgrade* your hosting experience.

1. **Find Your Inspiration.** Find a jumping off point and center your design, food, drink and décor around it. This can be a color, a pattern, an snapshot from nature, a piece of jewelry, artwork, a fashion style or anything else that inspires you. Just be creative and carry the theme throughout.



2. **Guess Who's Coming to Dinner.** Mix and match your guest list: Young and old, global and local, diverse and interesting. Don't invite the same old group of friends; change it up. This will create fresh dialogue and keep it fun. For sit down dinners, 8-12 people is the maximum number for ease of conversation. Soirées can handle greater numbers but should be kept to a manageable size between 15 and 40 guests.



3. **Set the Mood.** Low ambient lighting is key. Use lots of candles, outdoor strung lights, and even different colored bulbs to set the mood.



4. **Creative Décor.** To add a dash of sparkle and visual interest, use candles, fabrics, flowers and imaginative objects in your color scheme--and carry it through in everything, from plates to linens, centerpieces to glasses.

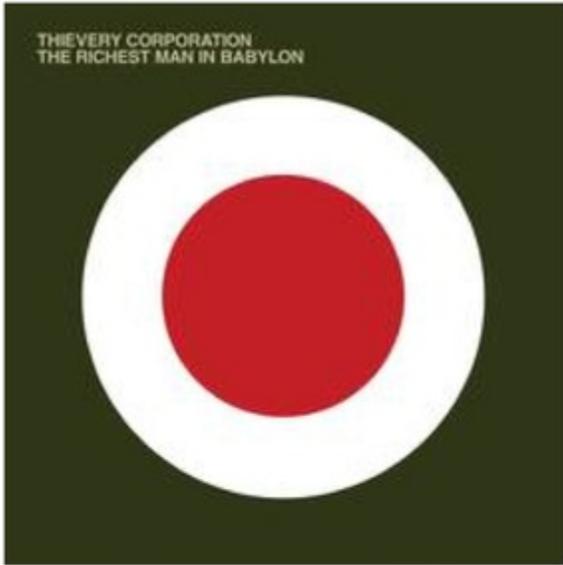


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5. **Get Help.** Realize that you can't do it all. Your guests are there to see you. If you can't afford to hire servers, enlist the help of your close friends to serve as bartender, DJ, etc.



6. **iPad DJ.** Set your playlist in advance so you are not constantly managing the music. Start with slower, ambient music and build up the intensity as the night continues.



7. Specialty Cocktails & Mocktails. Thanks to the upsurge in mixologists, there are so many new and interesting recipes for cocktails using fresh herbs, edible flowers, fruit and other seasonable ingredients. Dress it up and serve on a decorated tray.



8. **Bites.** Keep the food simple. Ditch the heavy sauces and cumbersome recipes for anything grilled. Just add a little olive oil, sea salt, and lemon and everything will taste gourmet.



9. **Dessert.** There's nothing like serving up a sweet ending, so have fun with it. Several specialty shops offer artistically-designed delectable edibles. Almost anything can be customized to your theme, from cupcakes to lollipops to cookies.



Custom Desserts by [Pete & Sweet](#)

10. **Have fun!** If the host isn't having fun, then guess what: Neither are your guests.



More great design tips here:

Dress Up Your Cocktails

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Use fresh herbs, exotic fruits, edible flowers and more. Have fun with it!





#1



#2



#3



#4



#5