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Throw a Beach-Inspired Party with Hosting Tips from a Pro

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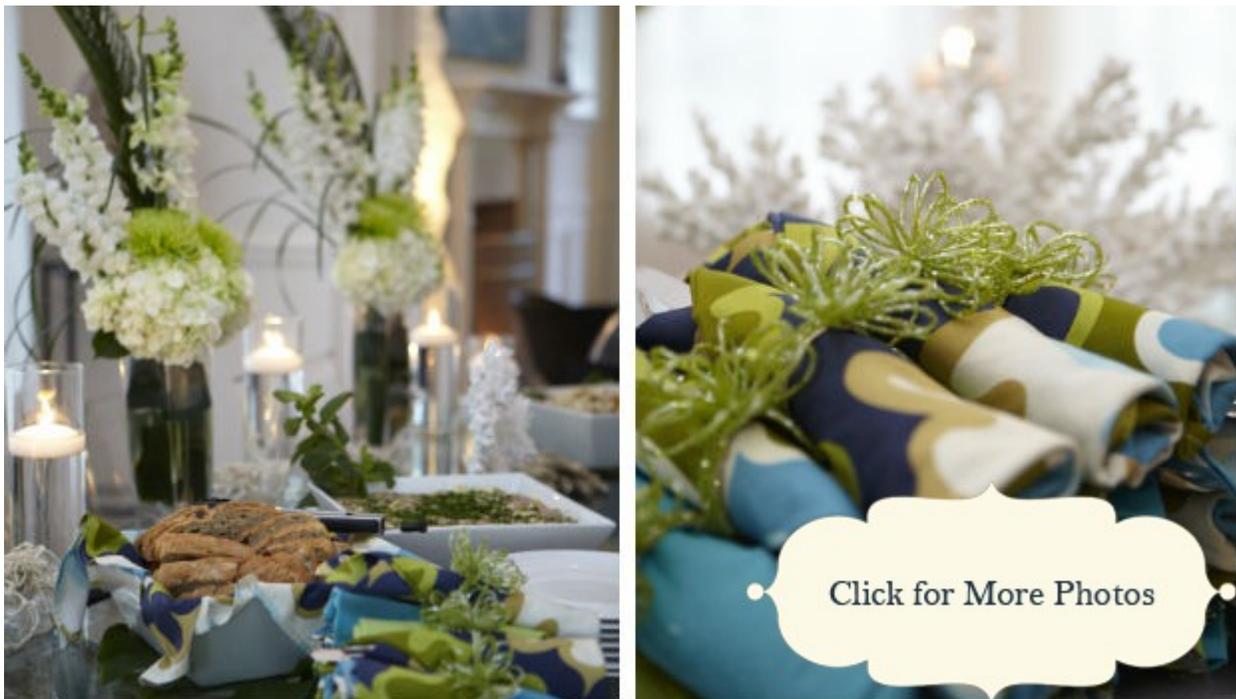


Summer is right around the corner, and we all know what that means: soon it will be time to fire up our backyard, deck, and poolside BBQs. There's no better way to entertain friends and family on a warm summer night than with tasty food hot off the grill.

Design and creativity are everywhere, so why not incorporate both into your entertaining? It doesn't have to be complicated, hard or expensive. You don't need a full catering team, professional party planners, or floral designers. With a bit of imagination and these simple tips, anyone can pull it off.

Find Your Inspiration: You can draw inspiration from anywhere—a color, a pattern, a place, a celebration, or anything else that moves you. Just be creative and carry the theme throughout. My inspiration was the beach. I tried to create a laid-back surfer vibe with décor in shades of ocean aqua, glistening white sands, and green palm trees.

Creative Décor: Carry your color theme throughout, from plates to linens, centerpieces to glasses. To add a dash of sparkle, pick a fabric or a set of imaginative objects that matches it. I bought the blue and white inflatable beach balls from Amazon for just \$6.00! The driftwood, sand dollars, glass roped balls and coral reef from Pottery Barn added visual interest.



Set the Mood: I cringe when I walk into a party and the lights are on high beam. Low ambient lighting is key! Use floating candles and Gerber daisies to enhance any environment.

Flowers: You don't need an expensive florist to make professional-quality arrangements. Use a varying array of vase heights, and choose flowers that match your theme and color scheme. I used palms and leafy greens for my centerpieces.

The Menu and Plating: Be sure to keep the food simple and avoid heavy sauces, which can be messy for your guests and time consuming to prepare. Include a range of meal options, from vegetarian to gluten and dairy free. Grilled and simply dressed, any protein will be tasty, healthy and easy to cook. This tuna sashimi wasn't hard to make but it looks spectacular arranged on martini glasses and served as an appetizer.

I put together things that were easy to grill, like this branzino sprinkled with sprigs of lemon thyme, parsley and dill and sprinkled with sea salt and pepper. Served it with ladolemono sauce on the side.



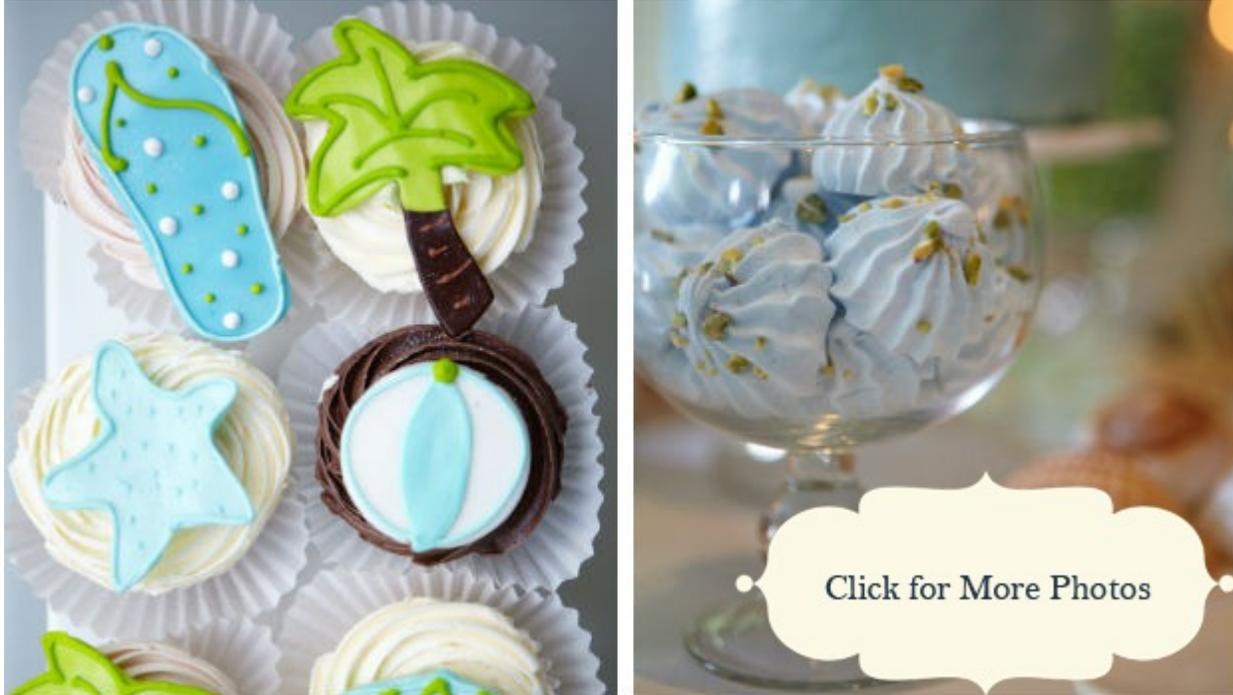
Specialty Cocktails & Mocktails: There are so many new and interesting recipes for cocktails that use fresh herbs, edible flowers, fruit and other seasonal ingredients. Dress up your drinks and serve them on a decorated tray.

I used a standard Mojito recipe but gave it a twist all its own by adding grated ginger and lots of fresh mint.

A fun thing to do is make up your own drinks. I mixed champagne with St Germain, garnished it with a lemon twist, and named it the Beach Fizz.

Otherwise a light white wine served chilled, such as a Chablis, with its minty steel and citrus peel character, or a crisp rosé, with its salmon pink color, are perfect for backyard imbibing.

Format: Most of us stress at the thought of orchestrating a formal sit down dinner with the meal served in courses. For a more casual and relaxed feeling, setup a buffet, so guests can mingle and help themselves.



Dessert: Setting up a dessert table allows for additional visual interest. There's no need to spend the time baking when so many specialty shops offer artistically-designed delectables. Almost anything can be customized to your theme, from cupcakes to macaroons to cookies. [Petite & Sweet](#) designed an amazing and delicious display of cookies, candies, and macaroons in vivid shades of Capri blue and green.

Too Sweet to Eat: The stars of the show were cupcakes from [Eat My Words](#), decorated with starfish, beach balls, umbrellas, palm trees and flip-flops.



Find Your Party Theme

Rana wanted a party inspired by the beach, and looked to the ocean, glistening white sands and green palm trees for ideas.

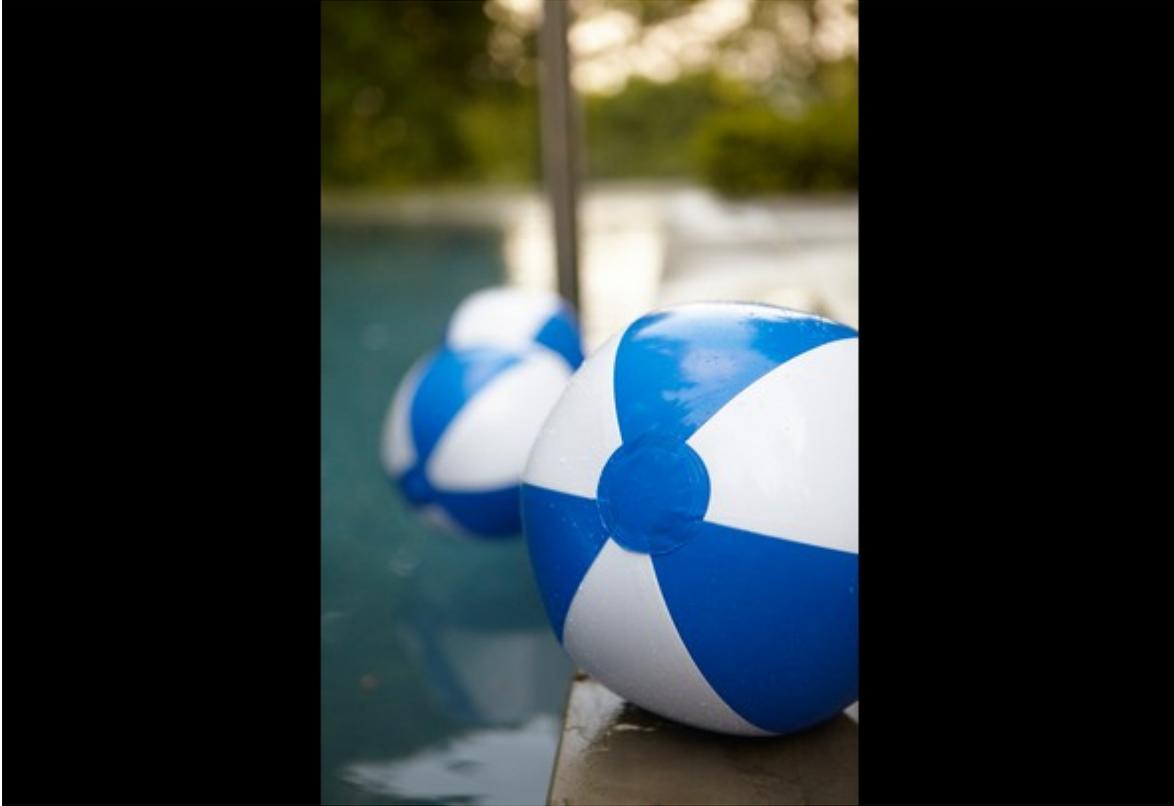
Mark Luciani



Decorations that Won't Break the Budget

Think of items that tie in the theme and don't cost a lot. These seashells were great on tables, or collected in glass jars.

Mark Luciani



Creative Decor

With inspiration of a beach theme in hand, Rana sourced items that touched on her party colours and would add to the theme. She found these colourful beach balls on Amazon.

Mark Luciani



Pay Attention to Decor Details

When creating a party theme, it's all in the details. Going the extra mile and finding pieces that'll conjure a feel and visual reference will really impress guests and solidify the theme.

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Party Decor

Rana found these glass roped balls from Pottery Barn. They bring to mind a seaside town.
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Driftwood Beach Decor
Look for easy-to-find accents, like driftwood.
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Setting a Beach Themed Table

Rana found table linens that tied into the white and blue party colours, and added some sparkle with beaded napkin rings.

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Set the Mood

Rana nixed harsh lighting and used floating candles and white flowers to set the mood.
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Serving Wines at Parties

A colourful bucket filled with crushed ice is a great, decorative way to keep wine handy for guests.

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Make it Special
Find chic trays and colourful tea towels to serve drinks on.
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Serve Seasonal Drinks

Consider the season and theme of your party when creating the menu and drink list. Mojitos are a great, refreshing summer beverage.

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Rana's Signature Drink

For a personalized touch, Rana created her own drink: champagne with St. Germain and a lemon twist. She named it the Beach Fizz.

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Keep Your Party Casual

Avoid the stress of a sit down dinner by serving dinner at a buffet. This allows guests to move around freely and talk with everyone.

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Guest-Friendly Fare

Rana kept the menu simple and served food that wouldn't be too messy for guests to eat while socializing.

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Perfect Party Plating

Get creative with plating and serve simple appetizers in unique arrangements. Martini glasses are great because they're easy to hold and eat from.

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Fire Up the Grill

Rana looked for foods that would be easy to grill and simple to serve.

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Creating a Dessert Table

Give guests a feast for the eyes by displaying all of your sweets on a table, with multiple layers and a variety of pretty dishes.

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Colourful Beach Cupcakes
No party's complete without cupcakes!
Mark Luciani



Seaside Sweets

These meringues look just like a seashell collection in this gorgeous glass jar.

Mark Luciani



Colourful Treats

Rana stayed through to her theme, right through to the final course: dessert! She served mini beach buckets filled with delicious treats.

Mark Luciani



Seashell Inspired
Even the icing on the cake resembles seashells!
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