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Regardless of the occasion or the size of the guest list, planning and hosting an event can be a daunting task. A seemingly endless stream of 'to do' lists and last-minute jobs can seem overwhelming even for the most seasoned host.

Fortunately, a bit of insider's knowledge is all that's needed to create a memorable function which runs smoothly and allows everyone to enjoy themselves.

After catering for numerous highly successful events, the professionals at Wild Roquette Catering have compiled a list of their favourite hints and tips guaranteed to make every host's job much easier.

Be Prepared!

- Look at your venue - do you have...?
- access for staff and equipment drop-off prior to guest arrival
- easy and clear access for guests (is it a security building, are there gates, dogs?)
- a shaded area and shelter for guests, if outside
- plenty of bench space and refrigerator shelf space in the kitchen
- bar/drink space with sink handy
- accessible parking
- electrical circuits that will handle cooking, music, lights, etc
- adequate outdoor lighting, if evening event
- designated places for cigarette butts – ashtrays or sand pails
- clear and obvious access to bathrooms
- a designated place for coats, bags
- appliances (oven, bbq, refrigerator) that are in working order
- tables for guests to set drinks and food down

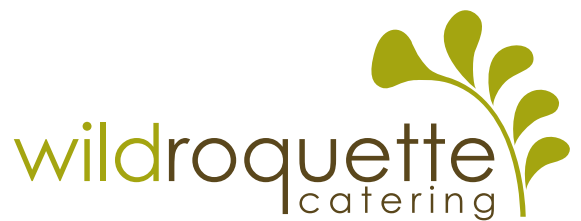
- chairs for older guests, those with children or guests who would like to sit and chat
- special decorations, flowers, candles, lighting, music
- plenty of gas for the BBQ
- an alternative venue in case of wet weather, if outside venue
- a clean and well-stocked bathroom
- a designated present table, cake table, guest book table, etc as needed
- trash cans
- knowledge of any other local events that might effect your guests' ability to get parking, navigate traffic, book accommodation, etc
- a noise curfew or restrictions on event timing
- a clear understanding of the terms of your venue hire contract, if applicable

Get Good Help!

Talk to your equipment suppliers, venue managers, hired staff – have you...?

- been introduced to your hired staff and given a 'point of contact' person who will address any issues
- mentioned special event themes, fancy dress, if applicable
- let them know if it's a surprise party, keep them quiet and unseen!
- asked them if equipment and/or staff are available for longer if needed - What's the rate
- clearly communicated what you expect from hired staff
- double-checked times, dates, locations, price and payment requirements with all suppliers
- asked for and received WRITTEN quotes, confirmations or statements

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- compile a master list of contact names and numbers for all key suppliers
- advised hired staff of the timing of speeches, cake presentation, food service start/end, as needed
- been told of any 'tricks' to using the venue appliances, equipment, door locks, smoke alarms, etc
- pointed out the guest(s) of honour and asked hired staff to specially attend to them
- alerted staff to any special food or drink needs among guests (children, vegetarians, people with mobility impairments)
- shown staff the layout of the venue and the all areas where guests are likely to congregate

Think Food!

Everyone loves to eat – do you have...?

- Enough food for the event's time of day and the length of the function - your caterer should give you help with this
- Food choices for any vegetarians, gluten free dieters, kosher observers, etc
- A cake, if needed
- Tablecloths, cocktail napkins, cutlery, crockery if not supplied by caterer
- Kids food at adult parties and adult food at kids parties – you never know who will turn up!
- A good mix of food types – seafood, vegetables, meat, sweets
- Party-friendly food that's easy to eat while mingling
- An idea of the order in which food will be presented - will you have food set out when guests arrive?
- Considered the photographer, the band, the dj and/or the marriage celebrant in your guest count for food

Think Beverages!

Partying can be thirsty business – have you...?

- Considered non-alcohol drinkers - plenty of water, soft drink and juice on hand
- Purchased a range of alcoholic beverages – white wine, red wine, low alcohol beer, regular beer, champagne, liquor
- Made sure you have enough glasses for all beverages – budget for about 25% more glasses than number of guests
- Asked your catering staff to clear empty glasses often – they can wash glasses if you run low.
- Dedicated a good amount of space to a bar set-up, if needed
- Decided where you will store drinks so that they will be cold but accessible - Do you need bins with ice?
- Bought plenty of ice for chilling beverages and for making mixed drinks
- Decided where BYO coolers and eskies will be left by guests
- Provided BYO cooler tags and wine charms to make it easy for guests to keep track of their drinks
- Asked your caterer if cocktail napkins will be supplied or if you need to purchase them
- Considered placing an antipasto or cheese platter near the drinks to encourage drinking guests to eat
- Designated a spot for recycling bottles and cans
- Got extra bottle openers and bar accessories handy
- Planned for spills and accidents, made your furniture and carpet stain resistant, cleaning supplies handy
- Let your bartender know of any special guest drink preferences and have supplies on hand

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- Watched your guests to make sure they don't drive if they shouldn't be on the road
- Got on hand the number of a taxi company if needed
- Thought of drink accessories and garnishes – cocktail umbrellas, drinking straws, limes, olives, etc

Everything Else!

Little things make everyone happy and comfortable - have you...?

- Purchased mosquito repellent
- Told your neighbours to expect a bit of noise and traffic (or invited them along!)
- Created a safe play area for kids and an open, cushioned space for toddlers and babies
- Designated a comfortable and quiet room for sleeping children
- Stocked up on Tupperware to store leftovers (and labelled them with your name if sending food home with guests)
- Got cash on hand in case you need to make a quick dash to the corner store
- Purchased birthday candles, if needed

Give yourself a pat on the back for a job well done!