

MARTHA STEWART

THE FASHION ISSUE

weddings

400+

**FRESH IDEAS FOR
YOUR BIG DAY**

the best dresses,
cakes, flowers,
and more

\$5.95 USA (CAN \$6.95)



FALL 2010
marthastewartweddings.com

THE MARTHA STEWART SHOW IS MOVING TO HALLMARK CHANNEL!

BEGINNING SEPTEMBER 2010 | VISIT MARTHASTEWART.COM FOR DETAILS



The Bar's Open!

Food, music, drink, and the people you love—that's all you need to begin your festivities. Here, a budget-friendly, guest-focused guide to planning a truly happy hour.

TEXT BY *Jennifer Benjamin*

THE COCKTAIL PORTION OF YOUR WEDDING may not be at the top of your planning agenda, but for many guests, those 60-plus minutes spent sipping drinks and nibbling on gourmet hors d'oeuvres are one of the best times of the night. "This hour sets the tone and warms guests up for your reception," says New York City-based planner and designer Shawn Rabideau. "It's also often in a laid-back setting, so you can get really creative, bring in different music or exotic cuisine, and let your personalities come through." To kick off your celebration, follow this primer to a wonderful cocktail hour. It includes easy tips, from how to get the flow of your room right to how to choose the delicious bites and booze that your guests will love.

CREATE AN OPEN LAYOUT

Walking out of a lovely ceremony only to find yourself stuck in a throng of guests pushing their way into the party room can be a quick mood killer. "The layout of your cocktail reception will make or break a good time," says Rabideau. To make the atmosphere more about mingling (and less about waiting for some wine), free the space of potential roadblocks, and make food and drink easily accessible.

GET A DRINK IN THEIR HANDS, FAST. As soon as guests enter the room, have servers stationed by the door with trays of Champagne, ice water, wine, and your signature cocktail so guests can grab a drink and move on, suggests New York City event planner David Tutera. Otherwise, you may end up with a bothersome bottleneck at the bar. (For the same reason, never set up a drink station right near the entrance.)

DIVIDE AND CONQUER. In addition to your main bar, situate one or two satellite bars at opposite corners of the room, serving only wine, beer, and soda. This way, guests who want just a glass of vino can get quick service.

KEEP FOOD STATIONS TO A MINIMUM. Setting up more than two or three stations can create more crowding than convenience as guests line up for that freshly rolled tuna maki. Instead, rely mainly on servers to get food to guests. "We like to do mostly passed hors d'oeuvres, and set up just a couple of food stations where people can pick up a bite that doesn't need a plate, like dim sum or sliced filet on small toasts," says Carla Ruben, president of Creative Edge Parties in New York City.

GIVE THEM A SEAT. You'll want to have a few cocktail tables—some high, some low—so that guests can have a place to rest their drinks and sit down. Place low tables with chairs along the wall, and high-tops without chairs toward the middle of the room.

COST-CUTTING TIP

During cocktails, guests are busy socializing, not focusing on décor. So don't spend a fortune on large arrangements. Instead, on every table, place a few low candles and float three flower heads, leftover from the centerpieces, in glass vessels, suggests event planner Shawn Rabideau.



HIT A SOFT NOTE

Your reception will most likely be filled with crowd-pleasing songs that guests can dance to, but your cocktail music should be quieter and feel more lounge-y. That doesn't, however, mean you have to settle for Lite FM tunes. "It's a chance for the couple to express their own musical tastes with a low-key vibe," explains Tyler Huffman of Chicago's Cage and Aquarium Productions. Spanish guitar, jazz trios, and acoustic duos are good choices; they're as mellow as classical music but with more edge.

COST-CUTTING TIP

You can save hundreds of dollars by using an MP3 player instead of a band for the cocktail hour. See our suggested playlists at right.

BUILD A GREAT BAR

After the ceremony, your guests will be ready to unwind—and get their drink on. Make sure you've got a well-appointed bar, the manpower to keep the drinks coming, and the signature sips they'll savor.

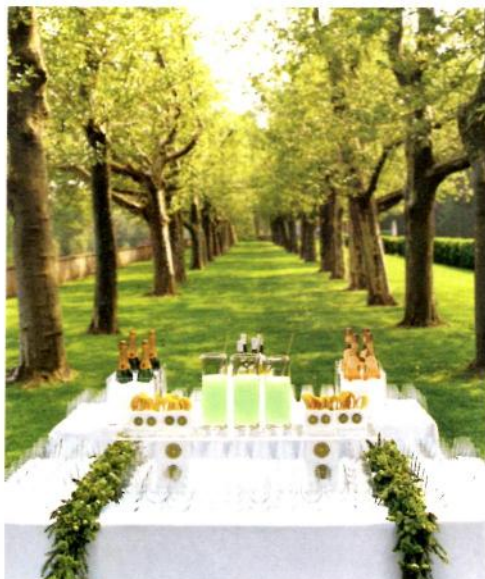
PLAN FOR TWICE THE FUN. Generally, it's safe to assume that each guest will have about two drinks during the cocktail hour. To avoid long lines at the bar, make sure there are at least two bartenders and one bar back (an assistant) for every 100 people that you invite.

LOAD UP THE BAR. Stock plenty of vodka (which always goes quickly, because it's a popular pick) as well as good gin, Scotch, dark rum, and a blended whiskey. If you're thinking about buying your own booze to save some dough, crunch the numbers first. Your venue or caterer may charge a corkage fee for each bottle opened, and that can make any savings a wash.

DON'T OFFER EVERY WINE UNDER THE SUN. When choosing wine for the cocktail hour, keep it simple. You're not doing a tasting, so just serve one or two whites and one red (sauvignon blanc, pinot grigio, and merlot are always favorites). Or try something new, like an Alsatian white or an Argentinian malbec. "Lesser-known labels can save you money and introduce your guests to wines that they may have never tried before," says Holly Safford, president and founder of The Catered Affair in Boston. Sparkling wine is also a good idea, but if your budget is tight, consider some of the refreshing small-vineyard bubbly, such as proseccos or cava, in lieu of more expensive Champagne.

DO SERVE UP SOME COLD BREWS.

Here's a surefire way to keep guests happy: Stock imported, light, and domestic beers (local microbrews are invariably pleasing, surprising, and a nice introduction to your wedding's locale for out-of-town guests). And



MUSIC TO MINGLE TO

Three DJs put their spin on cocktail hour.

STYLE OLD-SCHOOL CLASSICS

DJs at Scratch Events in New York City

La Vie en Rose, Louis Armstrong
My Baby Just Cares for Me, Nina Simone
Beyond the Sea, Bobby Darin
The Very Thought of You, Billie Holiday
The Way You Look Tonight, Frank Sinatra
The Best Is Yet to Come, Sarah Vaughan
The Girl From Ipanema, Astrud Gilberto
Ain't That a Kick in the Head, Dean Martin
Night in Tunisia (DJ Jazzy Jeff Remix), Duke Jordan
Tea for Two (Chris Shaw Remix), Sarah Vaughan

STYLE NEW ALTERNATIVE

Brian Poirier of SFProDJ in San Francisco

Knows That I, The Dirty Heads
How Deep Is Your Love, The Bird and the Bee
Love Like a Sunset, Pt. 2, Phoenix
Somewhere Only We Know, Keane
I'm Yours, Jason Mraz
Chasing Pavements, Adele
Naked as We Came, Iron & Wine
Skinny Love, Bon Iver
Chasing Cars, Snow Patrol
The Only Exception, Paramore
The Groomsmen, Teja Gerken
Tel Que Tu Es, Charlotte Gainsbourg

STYLE '80s REDUX

DJ Shelley Anderson at Cage and Aquarium Productions in Chicago

How Soon Is Now?, The Smiths
Close to Me, The Cure
Lips Like Sugar, Echo & the Bunnymen
You Are the Everything, R.E.M.
Just Like Honey, The Jesus and Mary Chain
Head Over Heels, Tears for Fears
Dear Prudence, Siouxsie and the Banshees
Rock the Casbah, The Clash
De Do Do Do, De Da Da Da, The Police
Glamour Boys, Living Colour
The Telephone Call, Kraftwerk
Forever Young, Alphaville

DOWNLOAD THESE PLAYLISTS

To get these songs on your MP3 player, log on to MARTHASTEWARTWEDDINGS.COM.

unforgettablemoments.com

UNFORGETTABLE
MOMENTS™



by LELA ROSE



VISIT any Payless® store near you, or go online, to explore all our footwear styles, online exclusives and the complete selection of **64 custom colors**, hand picked by Lela Rose.



Custom dyeing is FREE with your purchase.

 Payless
SHOESOURCE®

COCKTAIL HOUR

instead of bartenders tapping pony kegs at your wedding, ask them to serve the beer in bottles or, as a festive alternative, have them pour it into frosted mugs at the bar.

MAKE YOUR SIGNATURE DRINK TRULY SPECIAL. "People think of cocktails as a science experiment, but most of the time the fewer ingredients used, the better," says bartender Michael McIlroy of Milk & Honey, a bar in New York City. "Opt for drinks that have no more than four elements and use fresh-squeezed juices, seasonal herbs, and homemade syrups." Also consider *when* it will be prepared.

Some libations are best served just-made, which takes time, while others can be premade in batches. As for the liquor, Ruben suggests gin, vodka, or tequila. "Either way, you don't want anything too strong, so tell the bartenders to err on the side of caution," she says.



COST-CUTTING TIP

"Don't spend money on top-shelf liquor. Mid-level brands will save you hundreds of dollars and are totally acceptable for a wedding," says caterer and planner Carla Ruben. "But if you know that your groom, your dad, or many of your friends love a particular high-end liquor, keep a bottle or two on hand for them."

GO FOR LITTLE BITES, LOTS OF FLAVOR

Most event planners and caterers agree: When it comes to the servers, more is more. And when it comes to the cocktail food, less is more. After all, big taste can come in small packages.

MAN UP. Under no circumstances should you skip on the number of servers you hire to pass hors d'oeuvres. Make sure you're heavily staffed—one waiter per 25 guests—so that no one is forced to chase down a stuffed mushroom. "For every server bringing food to guests, there should be a server with an empty tray making his way back to the kitchen," Ruben insists.

DON'T FILL THEM UP. Elaborate pasta or carved-meat buffets may impress guests, but you don't want to stuff them before a delicious sit-down meal. Instead, offer a couple of passed meat dishes, one or two seafood choices, and a few cheese hors d'oeuvres and vegetarian samplings. Vary the color and textures—providing some hot, some cold, some crispy, some creamy. Now's also a good time to serve less-familiar dishes, like Grandma's famous moussaka, which may be too bold a choice for the main course but is perfect in bite-size form.

GO UTENSIL-FREE. It can be frustrating to stab at a plate of penne with a glass of wine precariously perched in the crook of your elbow. A good rule of thumb from Napa Valley-based planner Sasha Souza: "No picks, no sticks, no tails, no trash."

COST-CUTTING TIP

The price of food is generally based on the preparation and the ingredients used. Ask your caterer for a list of basic selections, then think of ways to add flavor and flair to them. For example, you can enliven a simple slider with blue cheese, or serve three different dipping sauces for shrimp cocktail.

