

PARTY FEVER

With so many dinner parties vying for the attention of party-goers, especially during the holiday season, let yours be one that stands out. **By Valerie Chew**

ather than a run-of-the-mill party, throw an outrageously fun bash that your guests aren't going to forget anytime soon. Themed dinner parties are all the rage these days as they are interactive and entertaining.

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to themed parties. But it should engage the five senses, says famous party planner David Tutera, who even has his own hit show on *Discovery Channel*. Pick a theme – it could be centred around anything from colours to iconic figures and historical events – and make sure everything from the interior décor to menu and invites fit the look and feel you are

striving to create. A party planner, for instance, recreated the Titanic scene on board a ship, complete with the actual menu of the final First Class dinner.

If you are starting to think that such extravagance is not practically achievable, caterers will assure you that your fantasies can become reality. "For parties not held at home, we do venue sourcing. Places like the Asian Civilisation Museum and Sentosa are examples of places where we've held parties," reveals Janice Chew, marketing manager of Purple Sage, a catering service company.

Looking to caterers and party-planners can bring relief to party frenzies. But to create a party that's unique requires a personal touch. Here are a few suggestions to fire up the imagination.

ACADEMY AWARDS NIGHT

Lay the red carpet, make score cards, and be sure to turn up the heat. This party is all about the glitz and glamour that showbiz embodies. Have

nomination cards and voting slips ready for your very own awards ceremony with fun categories like Best Dressed, Most Stylish and Best Hair-Do. The idea is simple: make your guests feel like stars for a night.

Setting the Scene:

Give your guests the A-list treatment by hiring a couple of photographers to wait at the entrance and snap away as they arrive. The overall décor should be modern and glamorous, which can be achieved using basic yet striking colours like red, black and gold. Exquisite tableware and tall, burnished candles – the closer the resemblance to the famous golden statue, the better – have pride of place at the dinner table. To make guests feel special, pen their names on place cards and tie them using gold tassels around napkins.

Dress Code:

Gorgeous evening gowns and classy tuxs; and of course, the bling-bling.

Party Invites:

Have invites done up like Oscar result cards, preferably in gold with black lettering.

Food:

Prepare a cheese board boasting a wide array to be enjoyed with crackers and a selection of red wine. Roast pork leg with citrus marmalade serves as an impressive centrepiece for a holiday feast. Mixed mushrooms and mashed potatoes are the perfect supporting cast. For a happy ending, serve warm chocolate soufflé covered in ground pistachios.

Signature Cocktail:

Million Dollar Cocktail – 1 oz gin, 1 tsp sweet vermouth, 1 tsp dry vermouth, $\frac{1}{2}$ cup pineapple juice; add a dash of egg white and Angostura bitters.



MASQUERADE BALL

It's time to play dress-up. Taking its cue from the likes of Shakespeare and the *Phantom of the Opera*, this party is an eclectic blend of grandeur and whimsy.

Setting the Scene:

Create a feast for the eyes with attractive, sensuous décor. A treasure chest of exotic masks lies open near the entrance, beckoning guests who come without one to veil their faces. Scented candles in stained glasses and colourful lanterns line the hallways, bathing the room in muted light. Deck tables and dress chairs with fabrics that are rich in colour and elaborately textured with a touch of antiquity.

Dress Code:

Slashed, ruffled and puffed, brilliantly coloured coats and dresses decked out with brass buttons and buckles; all these topped with cocked hats, gaily festooned with ribbons and streamers, plus colourful stockings and high-heeled boots. Not forgetting the most important element of all: the mask.

Party Invites:

Invites should be vibrant and compelling, embossed with coloured feathers, sequins and the works.

Food:

What is a soirée without hors d'oeuvres? Because this is a cocktail party, tapas ranging from heavy to light are a must-have. Try a good mix of fresh tomato bruschetta, baby lamb chops with rosemary cream, melon and prosciutto skewers, Mexican black bean quesadillas and candied fruit tartlets.

Signature Cocktail:

Mardi Gras Flasher – 2 oz rum, 6 oz ginger ale and 1 tsp grenadine syrup.

MURDER MYSTERY DINNER PARTY

A party to die for, this is Cluedo with a twist. Each guest is assigned a character, so you can be sure they play an active role. Instructions are printed on invites and the 'murderer' whose crime is stated in his or her invite, is revealed only after dinner.

Setting the Scene:

Think film noir, and use appropriately dark music and ambience to set the stage for a mystery. Strategically place pseudo murder weapons around the room to act as clues. When welcoming guests, casually deliver the first round of clues. This helps to encourage guests to get into the roles and share their 'suspicions' with whomever they choose during the course of the evening.

Dress Code:

Dressed in character, guests are identified by the colour of their clothes. For example, Miss Scarlet will come dressed in red; Colonel Mustard, yellow; Professor Plum, purple and so on. Feel free to come up with as many interesting characters as you can.

Party Invites:

Invitation cards are vital to this theme. Guests need to know what exactly to do on the day of the party. Your invites should include the basic party information, such as time and venue, as well as game instructions and character information. Black cards with words scrawled in blood red appeal to the murder-mystery theme.

Food:

Come up with interesting monikers for as many dishes, like 'killer wings', 'poison fish' and for desserts, 'Death by Chocolate'.

Signature Cocktail:

Red Death – 1 oz Vodka, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Amaretto, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Triple Sec, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Southern Comfort, $\frac{3}{4}$ oz Sloe Gin, slash of orange juice and a dash of lime juice. 