



> great ideas

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To do your party up right, break the process down. Think about each element—from the way you greet your guests right through to party favors—as a separate item that sets the mood and helps energize your event.

# get this party

## 17 Wow-Your-Guests Ideas

BY IYNA BORT CARUSO



> great ideas

## >12 OUTSIDE IN

Bring the outdoors inside with a party theme that'll transport your guests. Kathi Evans, owner of All the Best Weddings and Celebrations in Toms River ([atbcelebrations.com](http://atbcelebrations.com)), planned a beach-themed wedding for one New Jersey couple. Invitations popped up into Adirondack chairs, place card holders doubling as favors were little Adirondack chair/picture holders set on small swatches of sod, and the couple's chairs were (what else?) Adirondack chairs with their names stenciled on them.

## >13 THE FAVOR FOR YOUR COMPANY

Everyone loves a surprise. Be inventive by giving your guests the unexpected, something both beautiful and meaningful. Allison Sargent coordinated a lavish Chinese wedding with a traditional "double happiness" theme. When guests sat down at the table, they discovered their napkin rings were actually necklaces of red string with a double happiness coin, which they all spontaneously wore to the reception.

## >14 IT'S SHOWTIME

Video and photos aren't just for the archives anymore, says Cindy Torry, owner of Cindy Torry Events in Hewitt ([torryevents.com](http://torryevents.com)). Brides are playing back their wedding ceremonies during the cocktail hour; corporate events are showcasing digital slideshows of guests during receptions. Think of integrating photography and videography as part of the entertainment.

## >15 SWEET RETREATS

For corporate events, resist the urge to pass out T-shirts with logos to your guests, advises event planner Allison Sargent. Instead of another piece of branded merchandise they're likely to throw in the back of a closet, a box of customized cookies, complementing your event's theme, will be better received.

## >16 PROVIDE A FAVOR BUFFET

Stylish parties now offer a favor bar, says author Sharon Naylor. "Just like celebrities do at swag bag-type events." Set out a silver platter and an assortment of items, like Godiva truffles, hot sauces from Hoboken Eddie's, retro gaudies or even cigars. Guests get to choose what and how much they want.

## >17 SWEET CHARITY

For parties with a more philanthropic bent, pair donations with small token gifts, such as a baggie of theme-colored M&Ms, which can be personalized at [mms.com](http://mms.com). "A very hot choice," says Sharon Naylor. On a printed card, specify that a donation has been made in your guest's name. And select your charity wisely. "Make sure they won't be offended by your choice of political party or radical group," Naylor stresses. Medical research foundations are safe choices. **Q**

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