

Some Enchanted Evening

Written by L.A. Plume
Wednesday, 13 May 2009 00:50

Dear L. A. Plume,

My husband's 60th birthday is approaching and I would like to have a wonderful party for him. What experience/advice/suggestions do you have about a birthday party?



What kind, how to plan it, where to have it, should it have a theme, etc.? I don't want to do the same old 60's party, he dislikes costumes and such, so I'm at a bit of a loss. One of his passions is fly fishing; can I do something around that? Can I have it at home or should it be out, in a restaurant or other kind of space?

Help!

Dear Party Girl,

Wow, those are a lot of questions! First of all it depends on the size of your guest list compared to the size of your house, and then your budget. Do you want to serve food, can/will you have it catered, or will the guests all bring a dish – perhaps in lieu of a gift? However, I'm big on gifts, so asking for food instead doesn't appeal at all to me. If you go with a fly fishing motif, don't serve anything that even remotely looks like it has flies in it. I once went to a dinner party and there was a lovely pure white potato salad with raisins in it. Since I had never had raisins in potato salad before, my first instinct was to consider the resident cockatoo. Fish, of course, would be an excellent choice, although perhaps not tuna noodle casserole.

All sorts of decorations could be created around fly fishing, and if you can find a place by the side of a river to have it, you should be able to throw a 'reel' good party. If you choose to have the party at home you have more control over the decorations and are not limited in your set up and break down time.

As for my experience, I recently attended a wonderful party at a friend's home in Beaufort. When I got there, I asked myself, "Where are the paparazzi?" They should have been there – it was the most smashing of parties. Perhaps they were just disguised in uniform, costume, or black tie.

I have long since lost count of all the magnificent parties I have attended – black tie, white tie, costume parties, and balls. My previous favorite started with a concert where Ricardo Muti conducted, or Itzhak Perlman performed; then there were full bands in eight different ballrooms, followed by a champagne brunch at two o'clock in the morning. The gowned women, and men in white tie and tails, were resplendent in their beauty.

But even that event did not hold a candle to the one I recently attended here. I felt like I was going on a maiden voyage to a movie set. Every single, solitary detail was perfect, beginning with the formal invitation that had been sent with a reply card, much as if I had been issued a boarding pass for a celebrated cruise. I thought I might have that sinking feeling that often accompanies me to parties that I attend alone, but there seemed to be no need for me to arm myself with a proverbial life jacket. When I walked in the door, I was greeted by the uniformed hosts and immediately served a vessel of wine large enough to put me afloat. I felt the warmth of their hospitality and it was as if my ship had set sail to enjoy the party.

Dinner was served in ten courses – oysters on a glistening bed of ice, and too many other delicacies to mention, were adeptly and creatively prepared by a magnificent chef in the kitchen and unendingly passed to everyone. Cocktails flowed like the never-ending sea. On the lawn

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was a large dance floor where the band played under the shimmering light of a crystal chandelier suspended from the night sky. The outfits and costumes had a range that would have suited the Macy's Day Parade. Candelabra and flower arrangements of astors, roses and lilies, decorated the tables.

As I watched all the couples dancing in the romantic setting to sentimental music, it hit me just as hard as the Titanic hit the iceberg, that my heart might be lost at sea. So with the brilliant light of a white star in my eyes and the music in my heart, I slipped out into the night alone. And when I left, the band played on.