



Courtesy of AdBuilder

# Cheers!

## Holiday parties add flavor to the festive season

BY KRISTI RITTER  
LONGMONT TIMES-CALL

In the season of caroling, egg nog and tasty treats, holiday parties are a great way to bring together friends and family for a festive event. Pulling off a successful party takes a little work on behalf of the planner, but thanks to event planner Becky Schneider of Creative Events by Design in Longmont, there are some tips that will make the planning easier and allow you more time to enjoy the festivities.

Here are Schneider's ideas for three styles of holiday parties.

### Cocktails for Everyone

It's time to leave the little ones at home for this adult-only event where a little more creativity can be put forth when it comes to the drinks. If you're going for a full-fledged cocktail theme, select some signature drinks that will be the focus of your festive affair. A Poinsettia combines champagne, triple-sec and cranberry juice for a toast to the holidays, while a Candy Cane blends SKYY Berry vodka, Peppermint Schnapps, Creme de Cacao, grenadine, half and half, and soda water for a sweet concoction that is served in a glass with a crushed-peppermint rim.

Wine tasting parties are another favorite. Depending on the size of the event, Schneider says, a fun way to incorporate different wines is to have guests bring their favorite bottle, or the host can provide a tour of countries with their favorite vineyard selections. "It's a great event that guests really enjoy," she says.

- Food — Appetizers and finger foods pair great with wine and cocktails. Cheese, fruits, small meats, crackers and intricate desserts such as crème brûlée, tortes and chocolate fountains go great. "Chocolate fountains are great conversation pieces for parties, especially for guests who don't know many people," she says.

- Entertainment — Set this party with subdued background music that adds to the ambiance.

- Decor — With a variety of religious beliefs and opinions, decor is always an issue in today's holiday settings, especially when it



comes to a tree and Santa. Know your crowd and stick with something safe when planning a holiday party. Color is always a great way to go, and this year's new red is blue, similar to that of Hanukkah.

### Open to All

An open house is the perfect way to incorporate the entire family into the holiday party scene. Guests can drop in at their convenience and leave easily if the kiddos get a little unruly. The key is to set up food and drink stations throughout the home or business, which promotes movement and conversation.

With people coming and going and your desire to greet everyone, there is less time to tend to food and drink, so choose wisely and simply.

- Food — Finger foods, snacks, petit fours and anything mini work great to tempt your guests at neatly-placed stations. While food that can easily stay at room temperature is ideal, sterno and crockpots are easy to set up and keep foods hot.



Photos courtesy of Creative Events by Design

Continued from 12

- **Entertainment** — Keep it lighter, whether it's an iPod playing holiday music in the background or a musician playing an acoustic guitar. Open houses also lend themselves to local choir groups that can provide musical entertainment. "The carolers add a nice time to the holiday atmosphere," she says.

- **Decor** — In many cases, a holiday open house is usually framed by a tree, but a theme can also play a part, such as a winter wonderland with ice blue trim and snowflakes, or cozy comfort with evergreen, berries and pinecones.

- **For the Kids** — Depending on the crowd, having a Santa on hand to talk with the kids will be a big hit, Schneider says. Other ideas include a place for kids to decorate cookies or make an ornament.

#### A Formal Affair

Perfect for a home or business gathering, a formal dinner party is a great way to entertain guests, allowing them to pull out their fancy dresses and tuxedos for an evening among friends and family.

- **Food** — If it's a company party, food can get expensive if you're dealing with a hotel. But even in the comforts of home, the cost to dine can become pricey. More formal parties have gone to heavy hors

d'oeuvres, which are cheaper, while still allowing people to mix and mingle and feel satisfied. Buffets are also a less expensive route.

- **Entertainment** — At company parties, bands or disc jockeys cater to every taste music for guests, giving them the opportunity to cut a rug. Some fun new twists for entertainment include karaoke and game show nights. Schneider says karaoke works great for a small, tight-knit group of employees, while a game show allows people to compete for prizes, which everyone loves.

- **Decor** — Depending on the location of the party, decor may be influenced by a home's holiday tree, evergreen and mistletoe hung in the bows. Business parties at an alternative location can go all out with a creative theme, whether it's dancing through the snow at a winter wonderland or gazing across the room through candlelight and poinsettias. Additional ideas include tall clear vases filled with colored holiday ornaments, scented floating candles and small white lights that sparkle around a room.

- **Smile** — Having a photographer on hand is a great extra for the party. "It's generally one time a year that they can get a nice and formal shot with their significant other," Schneider says.



Courtesy of Creative Events by Design