

By Angela Zaltsman

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Attendees are no longer satisfied sitting down at a dinner offering the three traditional courses. They want more, and that more can be challenging to offer within the framework of an event's goals and restrictions.

Key to integrating a theme into an event is to ensure that the theme is first introduced through the invitation and that it is consistently evident from this beginning stage, through the middle, end and follow-up stages of the event.



**The Invitation:** I announce the theme in the invite through the event title. The invite is the first contact people have with the event and it is what will get them excited. Get creative: You can do an e-vite, a printed invitation or even a YouTube video for something more unique. The invite is where it all begins!

**The Venue:** Pick a venue that speaks to your theme. For events on a budget, I typically suggest a venue with great atmosphere that offers chairs, linens and furniture so that you can avoid the cost of bringing in these items. For budget-free events, you can opt for a venue that is unique and dress it up so that it speaks to your theme, bringing in bars, lounge furniture, colourful linens or tables that do not need linens.

**The Welcome:** Make sure your guests are greeted at the door and feel welcomed. Consider hiring in-theme costumed actors to receive your guests. Or you might have your greeters wear an informal uniform of colourful matched ties, or ties bearing your event's logo or name.

**The Party, the Main Event:** While there is nothing wrong with the failsafe standard of passed hors d'oeuvres and a bar, you can also switch things up with a station at which a mixologist teaches your attendees how to make the cool welcome drink they were offered, in both alcoholic and non-alcoholic versions. Continue your theme with an action food station where dishes are prepared in front of your guests – a great focal point for the cocktail hour.