



# Hostess with the Most-ess

## Party Planning Still Has Its Thrills

BY MIKE BENHAIM

Living around any of the esteemed villages in mid-town Toronto carries its own lifestyle. One that centers around family and community, and shares one implicit reality: at some point, you're going to throw a party!

Whether it's a wedding, christening, bar mitzvah, or graduation, when that time comes, you will find yourself surprised, and likely overwhelmed by the preparation involved. You will be confronted with decisions that never occurred to you, each with a price tag for which the opportunity cost is enigmatic.

Enter Angela Zaltsman, an event management consultant serving central Toronto for two decades. She is a Certified Meeting Professional (CMP) who sits on several industry advisory committees. This is her passion. That ingredient is what turns moments into milestones, and lasting memories for all.

In the 90s, Angela arrived from Winnipeg to a popular mid-town restaurant night club, where she began a mutual love affair with her residential and commercial neighbours as she was quickly promoted to manager. Her organizational skills and grace under fire served her well as she evolved into a reputable figure in the surrounding communities, and led to the next phase of her career.

During the next five years as catering manager of Avenue Road's Park Hyatt hotel, Zaltsman's leadership

and poise twice earned her the title of 'Manager of the Year'. Some of the upscale clientele were previous patrons from adjacent "villages" who sought her out as a trusted source to handle their important functions.

Then, from the Schulich School of Business to Holiday Inn, she perfected her craft. Conducting events with guest-lists ranging from dozens to thousands, for some of the most influential companies on the continent and a long list of celebrities. Shania Twain, Kiefer Sutherland, and Dan Aykroyd, all had but favorable endorsements for Angela's seamless execution and professionalism.

Eventually, she realized that to best serve her customers without limitation, she would have to branch out on her own, and A to Z Event Management was born.

Almost instantly, she found herself hired and referred by some of the same neighbours she served along the way.

The question one might ask, is 'why? What makes Zaltsman, or any event manager, special? Is it her solid relationships with venues and suppliers of everything from chair covers to fruit animals? Most importantly, she listens. Understanding her client's vision and their budget, she plans her approach to see it through to fruition. Then, when she's walked you to the threshold of your jubilee and you think it's over, it's really just begun.

Bringing all facets seamlessly together is where Angela earns her



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stripes. All of that experience affords her an almost psychic ability to expect the unexpected and improvise stealthily so that neither you nor your guests need ever see beyond the proverbial curtain. Those who underestimate the value of that, of being present to enjoy their own festivities, are the ones who end up truly appreciating what A to Z brings to the table. She sweats, so you don't have to.

When the lights go down and you feel the gratification of world-class host with the peace of mind of every other guest, Angela receives the satisfaction of another happy customer. ●

**MIKE BENHAIM** is a Montrealer living in Toronto who writes a national newspaper column, music blog and miscellaneous absurdities. The former DJ and entertainer is a widely self-recognized world champion of "Name that Tune".