

Creative Entertaining: Beach Blast (PHOTOS)

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Summer is right around the corner, and we all know what that means: soon it will be time to fire up our backyard, deck, and poolside BBQs. There's no better way to entertain friends and family on a warm summer night than with tasty food hot off the grill.

Design and creativity are everywhere, so why not incorporate both into your entertaining? It doesn't have to be complicated, hard or expensive. You don't need a full catering team, professional party planners, or floral designers. With a bit of imagination and these simple tips, anyone can pull it off.

Photo Credit: [Mark Luciani](#)



Find Your Inspiration. You can draw inspiration from anywhere--a color, a pattern, a place, a celebration, or anything else that moves you. Just be creative and carry the theme throughout. My inspiration was the beach. I created a laid-back surfer vibe with décor in shades of ocean aqua, glistening white sands, and green palm trees.



Creative Décor. Carry your color theme throughout, from plates to linens, centerpieces to glasses. To add a dash of sparkle, pick a fabric or a set of imaginative objects that matches it. Blue and white inflatable beach balls added a touch of whimsy. The driftwood, sand dollars, glass roped balls and coral reef gave the dinner table some visual interest.



Set the Mood. I cringe when I walk into a party and the lights are on high beam. Low ambient lighting is key. Use floating candles and Gerber daisies to enhance any environment.



Flowers. You don't need an expensive florist to make professional-quality arrangements. Use a varying array of vase heights, and choose flowers that match your theme and color scheme. I used palms and leafy greens for my centerpieces.



The Menu and Plating. Be sure to keep the food simple and avoid heavy sauces, which can be messy for your guests and time consuming to prepare. Include a range of meal options, from vegetarian to gluten and dairy free. Grilled and simply dressed, any protein will be tasty, healthy and easy to cook. This tuna sashimi wasn't hard to make but it looks spectacular arranged on martini glasses and served as an appetizer.

Specialty Cocktails & Mocktails. There are so many new and interesting recipes for cocktails that use fresh herbs, edible flowers, fruit and other seasonal ingredients. Dress up your drinks and serve them on a decorated tray.



A standard Mojito recipe with a modern twist by adding grated ginger and lots of fresh mint.



A fun thing to do is make up your own drinks. I mixed champagne with St Germain, garnished it with a lemon twist, and named it the Beach Fizz.



Format. Most of us stress at the thought of orchestrating a formal sit down dinner with the meal served in courses. For a more casual and relaxed feeling, setup a buffet, so guests can mingle and help themselves.





A dessert table allows for additional visual interest. There's no need to spend the time baking when so many specialty shops offer artistically-designed delectables. Almost anything can be customized to your theme, from cupcakes to macarons to cookies. [Petite & Sweet](#) designed an amazing and delicious display of cookies, candies, and macarons in vivid shades of Capri blue and green.



Too Sweet to Eat! The stars of the show were cupcakes from [Eat My Words](#), decorated with starfish, beach balls, umbrellas, palm trees and flip-flops.

As originally adapted from [HGTV](#)

Dinner Recipes by: Taste Worthy Cuisine



















