



Create a beautiful ambience by lighting outdoor torches and candles and stringing up some bistro lights.

Photographers will tell you that shooting people by candlelight always makes them look great, as the glow that you get really warms things up, and it's flattering for all complexions. Who wouldn't want to look fabulous at a party?

Take It Outside

Tips for fun, festive outdoor events—no matter the season

BY ROBIN SELDEN, MANAGING PARTNER AND EXECUTIVE CHEF OF MARCIA SELDEN CATERING & EVENT PLANNING

ALL PHOTOS FROM MARCIA SELDEN CATERING & EVENT PLANNING

The days of getting wrapped up in faux fur to drink vodka and party at a “cool” ice bar in an igloo are so pre-COVID! Now we party in the great outdoors no matter how cold (or hot) it is—and have found creative and fun ways to do it, thanks to a pandemic. While COVID may be lurking in the background, we’ve moved on and are embracing the opportunity to party outdoors any chance we get!

Whether a picnic on the patio, a BBQ on the lawn, a tailgate in the driveway, an igloo in the yard or a tented over-the-top soiree, the most successful events are those filled with great music, fab food and killer cocktails. It’s all about evoking joy and creating unforgettable memories.

Our favorite alfresco affairs begin with a simple idea that we can build upon. Since we are still cozying up to fire pits or California heaters during our cold weather chill in the Northeast, let’s look at tips for a backyard party that can take you from the cool end of wintertime all the way through the summer.





Have lots of great appetizers and snacks available for guests to graze on.

The ever-popular boards overstuffed with charcuterie and cheeses are not going away any time soon and remain fan favorites. They are beautiful to look at and delicious to eat—plus they dress up a table as edible décor. Get creative and add easy-to-grab individual crudites, yummy cones filled with different homemade chips and dips, great olive varieties, specialty popcorn and amazing nut mixes.



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Fire up the grill, as the scrumptious smells of dinner cooking are sure to whet anyone's appetite.

We love the taste of grilled meats and veggies cooked with lots of fresh herbs, olive oil and lemon, letting the flavors of the grill come through in a tasty Tuscan way. In cooler weather, have a large pot of hearty soup or a variety of chilis that can be served up in mugs, keeping guests toasty warm. In the warmer months, the same idea can be accomplished with great chilled or room-temp soups like creative gazpacho varieties.



Tune into a great playlist or hire live musicians to create the vibe, as music can truly elevate and set the tone for a party.

When creating the playlist, think about the length of the party; select songs that will start as background music but then increase in energy to get the crowd going as the party takes flight and guests have had a few cocktails. If you hope for dancing, boost the energy level of the playlist so that around dessert your music selections will get people up and moving.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robin Selden is the managing partner and executive chef of Connecticut- and New York City-based Marcia Selden Catering and Naked Fig Catering.

Along with her brother, Jeffrey Selden, the "Dynamic Sibling Duo" were named two of the "100 Most Inspiring People" in the wedding industry by The Knot; and Robin was also named to the BizBash 500, celebrating the top 500 event professionals in 2020 in the U.S.

Robin is on the President's Council of the International Caterers Association and won their coveted Chef of the Year award. She's a past Innovative Chef of the Year and a current Ambassador Chef for the Greenwich Wine & Food Festival. Robin and Jeffrey also teach a catering class at Cornell University's School of Hospitality in the fall as well as a special events class at the Boston University School of Hospitality in the spring.

For more information, visit marciaselden.com.



We couldn't love s'mores more...say that fast five times!

This sweet treat is so nostalgic, so much fun to make and tastes so darn good! We create custom marshmallows and homemade graham crackers to elevate the experience. It's always fun to ask our clients what their favorite sweets are so that we can surprise and delight them by incorporating that flavor profile into their custom marshmallows and graham.

By incorporating these elements into an alfresco affair, you'll take the guest experience to greater heights. After all, at an outdoor event, the sky's the limit. ●

"Shake things up" and have a custom martini bar with a creatively printed bar menu. Guests love getting in on the action, so let them shake up their favorite specialty cocktails. Pre-batch a variety of cocktails and serve them in pitchers or drink dispensers (make sure to have a virgin variety so the non-drinkers can play, too!). You can purchase fun individual cocktail shakers and have a big bowl of ice. Finish things off with great drink garnishes that will complement and enhance each cocktail. We also love our custom mimosa station with Champagne or Prosecco, several fruit purees, freshly squeezed juices and fruit, as well as our design-your-own sangria with rosé, white and red wine, sliced assorted fruits and berries—both fun and easy bars that everyone loves. Add sparkling water or juice for those not drinking alcohol.