

It's time for a great summer party. Maybe you're planning a big outdoor event, like a family reunion, garden wedding, or milestone birthday party. Or perhaps you've decided on the spur of the moment to invite a few friends over for a small get together. Here are some hot tips to turn your average summer party into a real blast.

1. Instead of balloons, hang inflatable beach balls.
2. Give each of your guests a little battery operated personal fan that you can get at the dollar store. It's a practical party favor that will come in handy if it's a very hot day.
3. No pool? Throw a sprinkler party. Tell your guests to bring their bathing suits for a run through the sprinkler. Provide water guns and water balloons for additional entertainment.
4. Rain in the forecast? Have an indoor picnic. Push the furniture to the side, put a checkered or gingham tablecloth on the floor, serve take out fried chicken, sandwiches and potato salad.
5. Use a beach pail to hold plastic utensils or napkins at your summer party. The plastic shovel makes a novel serving spoon.
6. Keep white Christmas lights handy all year. They look great strung around the patio, deck, trees, or around the table or doorway inside the house.
7. Try to have much more ice on hand than you think you'll need. And make sure you have lots and lots of beverages, especially frozen drinks and smoothies. Summer parties are the perfect time to try out some new recipes in the blender.
8. Use a wheelbarrow filled with ice. Add cans and bottles of your favorite drinks for a portable outdoor cooler.
9. Have a luau themed party. Decorate with grass skirts, plastic leis, etc. from a party supply store. Scatter seashells on the table. Hang colored lanterns. Play background Hawaiian music. Don't forget the pineapple and macadamia nuts.
10. If you don't have a backyard, have your summer party at the park, beach or even zoo.
11. Give each of your guests a dollar store beach pail as a party favor filled with summer stuff, like sunscreen, flip flops and a novel for summer reading. Add a homemade or professionally made personalized photo bookmark inside the novel that thanks your guests for coming to the party.
12. At night, light candles for atmosphere and Citronella candles to discourage bugs.
13. If you're having a pool or beach party, make sure you find a guest to volunteer as a designated lifeguard who is willing to give full attention to watching the kids in the water.

14. Have an ice cream party. Provide a selection of ice cream and sherbet flavors and let your guests add their own sundae and fresh fruit toppings.
15. Have extra sunscreen prominently displayed and available to any of your guests who may need it.
16. If you're doing the grilling, ask your guests to bring the salads and side dishes.
17. Have Christmas in July (or August). Put up your fiber-optic or pre-lit tree, play Christmas music, serve cookies.
18. Have a Mexican fiesta, complete with make your own tacos, salsa and chips (try some fruit salsas) and a pinata.
19. Some outdoor activities kids can enjoy at a party include a treasure hunt, blowing giant bubbles, water balloon toss, fishing for magnetic fish in a wading pool, ring toss in a wading pool, croquet, horseshoes, badminton, face painting, spin art, hide and seek.
20. Serve fresh, seasonal fruit in hollowed out melon or pineapple halves.
21. Take lots of photos at your summer party. Email a few of the best ones to all the guests who attended. Better yet, have custom made photo magnets made of a group photo or one of you and your family with a message thanking people for coming to the party. Then mail them out as a great remembrance to a special occasion.
22. Don't forget to toast some marshmallows!

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