

The Party Report



I think you all know we had a big party here at Plan Z HQ. It was a Saturday night blow out. For those of you who could not make it, or would just like to live vicariously, I'm going to lay out a few of the highlights of how it all came together and how it went during the night.

I knew I was going to have about 90 people in attendance, so I started prepping for the party early. This was probably the earliest I have ever done that. On Wednesday I rearranged the furniture in the area where the buffet was going to be set up. I decided I could tolerate having that room look a bit disorganized for a few days instead of doing it at the last minute. I got out all the platters the food would be served on and placed them where they would sit during the party. I even put little notes on each platter of what was going to be served on that dish so I could visualize how the colors and textures of the food would look that night. That way anyone helping me could just put the food on the designated plate, and in that place, without having to ask me, "Where does this go?" That's an idea I will take forward. It worked great.

I got the bar setup that night, too. My menus were all prepared in advance and I got my grocery list together 2 days ahead. I

always print off any recipes I'm going to use and keep them in a folder so I have them handy or I can hand one to someone helping me cook, and they can go to town without having to handle an awkward cookbook.

Friday morning I bought all of the food and Friday afternoon my colleague Grace helped me start cooking. Grace is a culinary school graduate so that sure came in handy. I gave her two of the more complicated dishes to cook. She was able to follow the recipes and hardly had to ask me anything. I was able to concentrate and get a few other things prepped and off to the refrigerator in the garage. Because this was a summer party, almost everything we cooked was going to be served cold. I wanted to be more hostess than caterer so if the food is set out ahead I can spend more time with guests than in my kitchen.

We cooked until about 6PM Friday and took a break. We were being so efficient I didn't need to worry. My Saturday prep list was ready to go. Saturday morning, two friends volunteered to come over and help. One was a cooking kind of guy and the other one was more of a cleaner/handyman. My husband teamed up with him and they got the front porch spotless and did all kinds of tidying up in the garden and around the house.

Allen was helping me in the kitchen. He and I knocked out the rest of the cooking along with Jennifer, and we were all done by noon. I HAD to be done by noon because that's when the video crew and the band showed up. The band was there to set up their equipment and test their sound system. The video crew was setting up to tape 3 of our dieting celebrities. We spent the afternoon interviewing them and recording their responses. They did an amazing job. Someday I'm sure you'll get to see some of the production. I have never had to sandwich a video production in between pre-party prep. It was a very tricky thing to try to pull off, but whew! That worked, too!

At 7PM, guests started to arrive. I hired my favorite bartender to take drink orders and my cleaning lady Coco was ready with her sister to help in the kitchen. They do a great job of walking around a party doing what we call 'groom the room.' They pick up empty drink glasses and dirty napkins. They keep everything tidy on the party floor. If anyone spills anything they are right there to clean it up. In the kitchen they help with any last minute food prep and they wash and dry dishes that come off of the buffet table as they are finished. There was one warm dish that had to be baked during the party so Coco and I teamed up to prep that, but otherwise I was able to circulate amongst the guests all night long.

The band started playing at 8:30. Our living area floors are poured concrete. Very industrial. I actually took sidewalk chalk and drew a dance floor border on the floor and wrote the word "DANCE" in the middle.

The serious blues fans were able to listen to the Will Tilson band at little club-style tables, and the dancers could cut loose on the floor. Those that just wanted to chat outside in the garden could still hear the band but it was quiet enough that they could carry a solid conversation.

The band was amazing. The food was delicious (even if I do say so myself!). I didn't get to eat any of it, but the compliments kept rolling in so I think my guests liked it. If I could put sound and smell-a-vision in this column I'd give you samples of both.



I know the food was a success because we cooked enough for 110 people, we had 90 in attendance, and the food was wiped out in two hours! All I had left at the end of the night was a pile of sliced red onions that were a garnish for a little beef slider

sandwich. Everything including the Peanut Butter Dream “shots” was gone. PBD is a great teeny dessert for a buffet. Buy those little plastic shot glasses at the party store. Make enough Peanut Butter Dream for the crowd and then use a little ice cream scoop to serve it in the shot glasses. I even found teeny tiny spoons that were very inexpensive at the same party store, so everyone could spoon their mini-dessert. There were also baby cupcakes, dark chocolate peanut clusters and more to have as sweet treats.

One highlight for me was the introductions time. I didn’t want to do a big Plan Z commercial or anything, but I wanted to introduce the three special people we had brought in for the party. Harry O came in from Mason City, Iowa. Biggie came from North Carolina and Alyssa came from Wisconsin. Harry has lost and kept off 175 pounds. Biggie has lost over 120 pounds and little Alyssa has lost over 255 pounds. The crowd cheered louder and louder as I introduced them.



I expected people to politely clap but I did not expect people to be jumping to their feet from where they were sitting. It was all very exciting.

I directed the audience to be able to go over to a TV where we had prepared a video show that displayed before and after pictures of dieters from all over the US and beyond. Everyone marveled at the transformations these dieters have gone through. There was no sound. It just played on a loop and the band played in the background. People were gathered around all night and smiling as they watched the show. They were genuinely happy for all involved.

The record-setting driving distance came from the Wilkinson’s. They drove all the way from North Carolina to meet me, dance at

the party and generally celebrate their achievements. They have both lost considerable weight and are very proud of their accomplishment. And they should be proud. They were so happy, they did this really cute thing where they pinned "before" pictures on their outfits so everyone could see their personal transformations, too. Besides that, these folks were a hoot! I was so happy to meet them.



I think everyone had a good time. The last guests left at 2:30 AM. Another sign of a good party.

Cheers,