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Creative Entertaining: A Caliente Twist on a Backyard Party

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As summer nights approach, many of us look forward to **entertaining in our backyards**. Whether it is a celebration, a dinner party or an intimate gathering of friends, it's paramount that guests feel relaxed and welcome. One way to do this is to **theme your evening**.

Theming a soirée instantly makes an event more fun and lively; that said, being creative is key. To add a dash of sparkle and visual interest, use candles, fabrics, flowers and imaginative objects in your color scheme. This outdoor pool and garden were transformed into a Mexican *sala de fiesta*. Here are some resourceful tips from the event, which you can apply to creatively enchanting your own outdoor space.

All photos by Mark Luciani.



- In keeping with the spirited Mexican *sala de fiesta* theme, the palette was punched up with splashes of orange, hot pink and lime green. Crisp linens and dinner napkins in almost any bright color of the rainbow are available for purchase or rent.



- Lightweight summer frocks and sandals, jeans and a tunic: guests were encouraged to wear relaxed and comfortable clothes, in bright lively colors.



[See menu and all recipes on foodnetwork.ca](http://foodnetwork.ca)

- Salt-rimmed and garnished with lime, freshly mixed Margaritas made for the perfect welcome cocktail.



- Live musicians are always entertaining, and band size should be based on the number of guests. For this intimate gathering, [Jorge Lopez](#) (centre) led a mariachi trio, perfect in volume and intensity. “[La Culebra](#)” filled the air — the sound of celebration!



- Dressed in silver-studded Charro outfits, musicians dressing the part enhance the overall experience; hot pink streamers from [Teatro Verde](#) (Toronto) swayed in the trees.



- Mini cacti were added to the terrain, and simple drinks, such as chilled water with lime and mint from the garden, were not only refreshing but also complemented the décor; candy bowls of various sizes filled with red hot chili peppers added a touch of whimsy to the dinner table.



- Cheerful, thematic party favors can introduce elements of surprise at every turn. Here, the dinner napkins were festooned with maracas.



- Floating orange daisies in glass vases filled with pink-dyed water carried the theme throughout.



- If children are invited, offer a mix of activities to keep them engaged; while one takes a peek at the treat-filled piñata, another enjoys the music.