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How to Throw a Winning Election Night Party (PHOTOS)

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Between [Super Bowl XLVI](#) and the [Olympics opening ceremony](#), 2012 has been a big year for communal television viewing. Tonight's coverage of the US election is sure to draw millions of viewers as well. If the past is any indication of how many people will be tuning in this evening, consider that the first of the three debates between [President Obama](#) and [Mitt Romney](#) drew 67.2 million viewers, according to the Nielsen television ratings - the highest number for a first debate in more than 30 years. The second [drew](#) 65.6 million and the three debates combined reported 24 million tweets.

Pollsters and pundits are predicting all sorts of scenarios for tonight's victor. "To be sure, election night is going to be a nail-biter, not necessarily because of how close this race is or isn't, but because the polling data are all based on wildly varying assumptions about who will and who won't vote," says Washington insider and Democratic strategist [Julian Epstein](#).

As recent transplants to Toronto from Washington, DC, where we lived just a few miles from the [White House](#), I felt it was my civic duty to host an election night party for my expat friends. Whether you're a [Democrat](#), a [Republican](#) or an [Independent](#), people like to celebrate and commiserate together. If nothing else, it makes the suspense and anxiety of watching the returns roll in that much more bearable.

A few key items are needed for success. First and foremost the viewing area should mimic a war room or campaign headquarters, with multiple media devices, a big screen HD TV, and laptops with live streaming polls and [political pundits'](#) Twitter accounts on display. Invite guests who have a wide range of political views to ensure lively conversation--and maybe even some verbal sparring. Encourage your guests to come equipped with their own devices and to dress in comfortable clothing for TV lounging. You can even create your own hashtag.

Your party should begin when the first polls close--and end only when the results have been tallied. "You may want to pace yourself with your beverage of choice -- be it coffee, beer or whatever," [Epstein](#) cautions, "Because it's likely to be a long night." Suffice it to say, your guests won't appreciate it if you kick them out while the outcome is still in suspense.

Décor in the theme of red, white and blue - elephants and donkeys, stars and stripes - can be carried throughout, from flowers to balloons, and lights. Life-size cutouts of President Obama, [First Lady Michelle](#) and Mitt and [Anne Romney](#) are a fun way to get guests to pose for photos.

Food in the color scheme of Red vs. Blue also works--not as in dying your food red or blue, but as in featuring traditional dishes from Red and Blue states. [Chef Cory Vitiello](#) of the hotspot, [The Harbord Room](#), who's appeared on the Cooking Channel's [Pop Up Gourmet](#), suggests a flavorful menu of American favorites.

Vitiello says Blue State dishes pull heavily from the east and west coasts and include healthy, earthy, and fresh organic fare while the Red States are represented by Southern spicy cuisine.

Burgers are the Independent, crossing party lines. Vitiello who knows something about burgers as his have topped the City Lists of [Top 25 Burgers](#), [Summer's Best Burgers](#) and he's competed in the Las Vegas [World Food Championship](#) says mini burgers are always a sure winner at gatherings.

For cocktails, enlist the help of a mixologist and have fun creating a range of drinks in shades of red, white and blue with creative names such as the Romney Slinger, the Obama Slam, the Caucus Room, and the Hanging Chad. Bright red apples, blueberries, cherries, strawberries and coconut add flavor and garnish. Serve wines from California vineyards and barrel-aged distilled spirits from the South.

For dessert, the Food Network's [Sugar Stars](#) show us how to arrange a table of tasty treats from [Petite & Sweet](#). The festooned macarons and whimsical cake pops help reinforce the theme throughout.

The artisan shop, [Eat My Words](#) shows us how cupcakes and sugar cookies can be artistically customized with images of Romney and President Obama, donkeys and elephants, and the US flag.

This slide show has some winning tips to throw your own election night viewing party. Photo credit: [Mark Luciani](#)



On the heels of the Mexican Day of the Dead, the artist Steve Loretta designed two edible sugar skulls inspired by Uncle Sam. President Obama wears the Democrat's donkey ears and Mitt Romney dons the Republican's elephant ears.





Festive Election Night Cookies by Eat My Words. Their delightfully decorative, and divinely delicious edibles help to raise money and awareness for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.





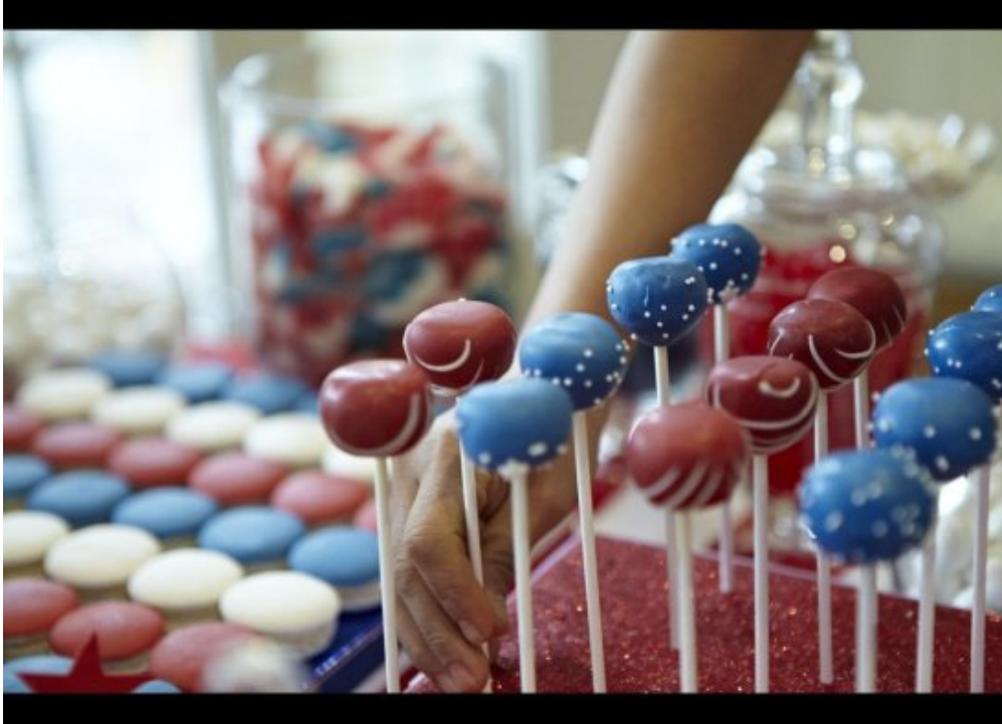
Cupcakes by Petite Sweet featured here include two flavors. Strawberry Champagne: vanilla cupcakes infused with strawberry jam, topped with champagne French buttercream. And Coconut Red Velvet: traditional red velvet cupcakes with coconut French buttercream.



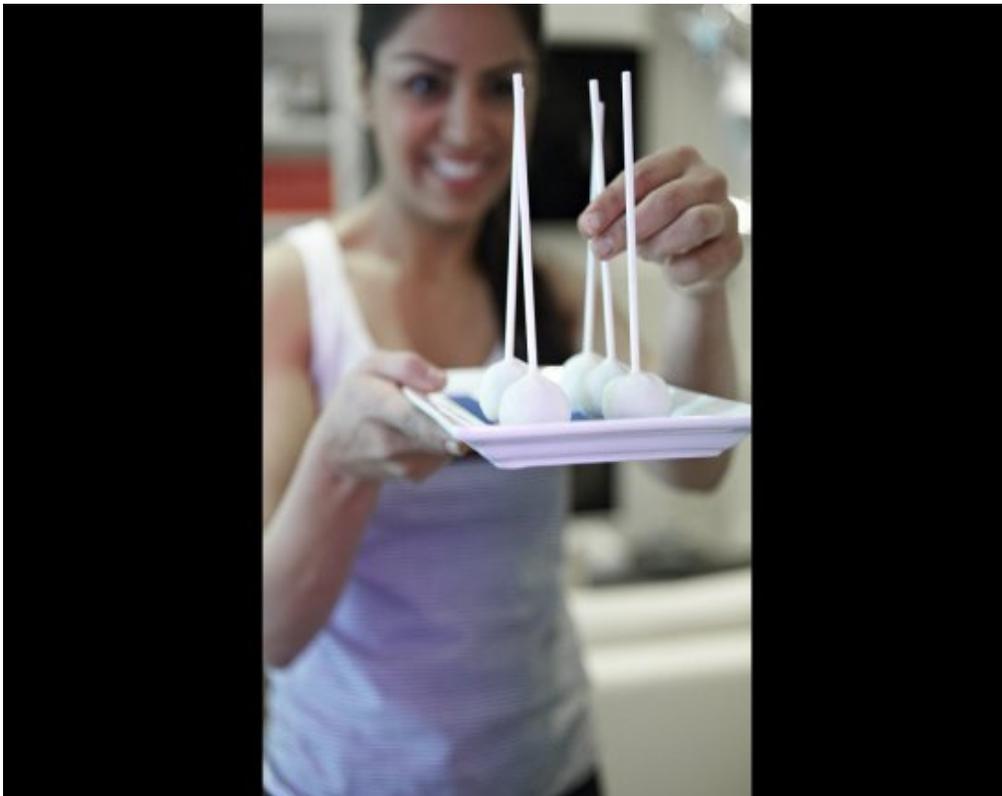


Macarons by Petite Sweet made with delicate almond meringue cookies with crunchy shells and soft interior. Flavors included, White Salted Caramel, White Chocolate Lime and Strawberry Coquelicot.





Cake Pops by Petite Sweet. Freshly made chocolate cake and Swiss meringue buttercream come together on a stick to make these delicious, hand-decorated cake pops. Dipped, sprinkled and drizzled in red, white and blue, they're a sweet bite of celebration.



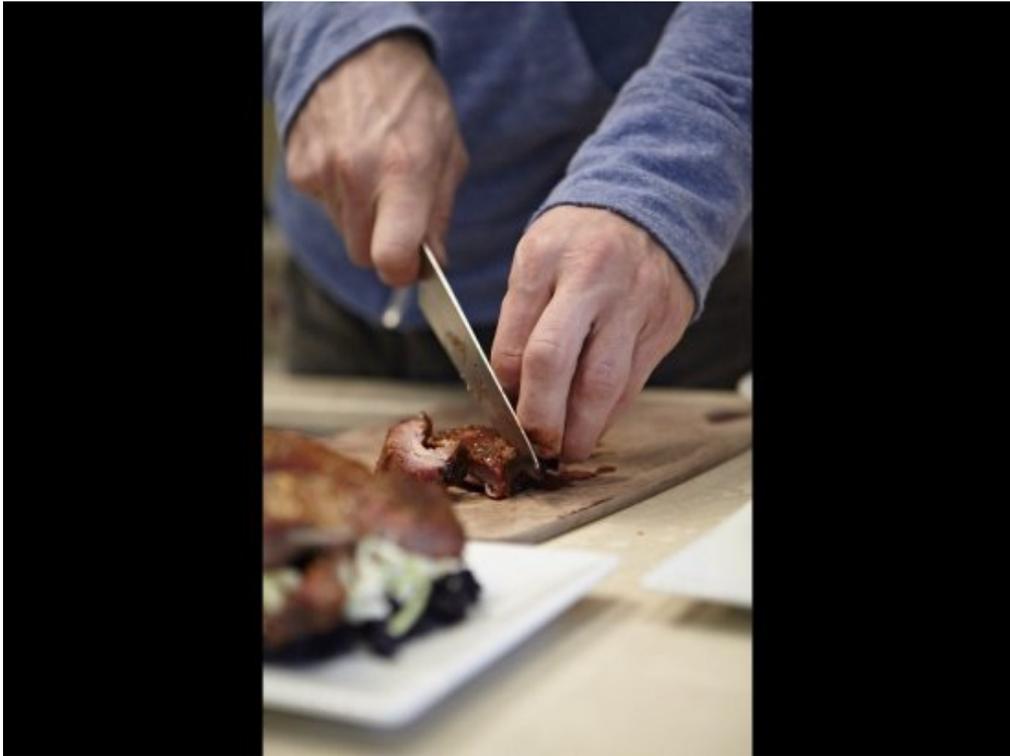




Blueberry and Hendricks gin and cucumber smash.



Blackberry, strawberry, coconut rum ice cream milkshake.



Smoked dry rubbed pork ribs and Carolina coleslaw.



Festive Election Night Cupcakes by Eat My Words. Their delightfully decorative, and divinely delicious edibles help to raise money and awareness for the Stephen Lewis Foundation.



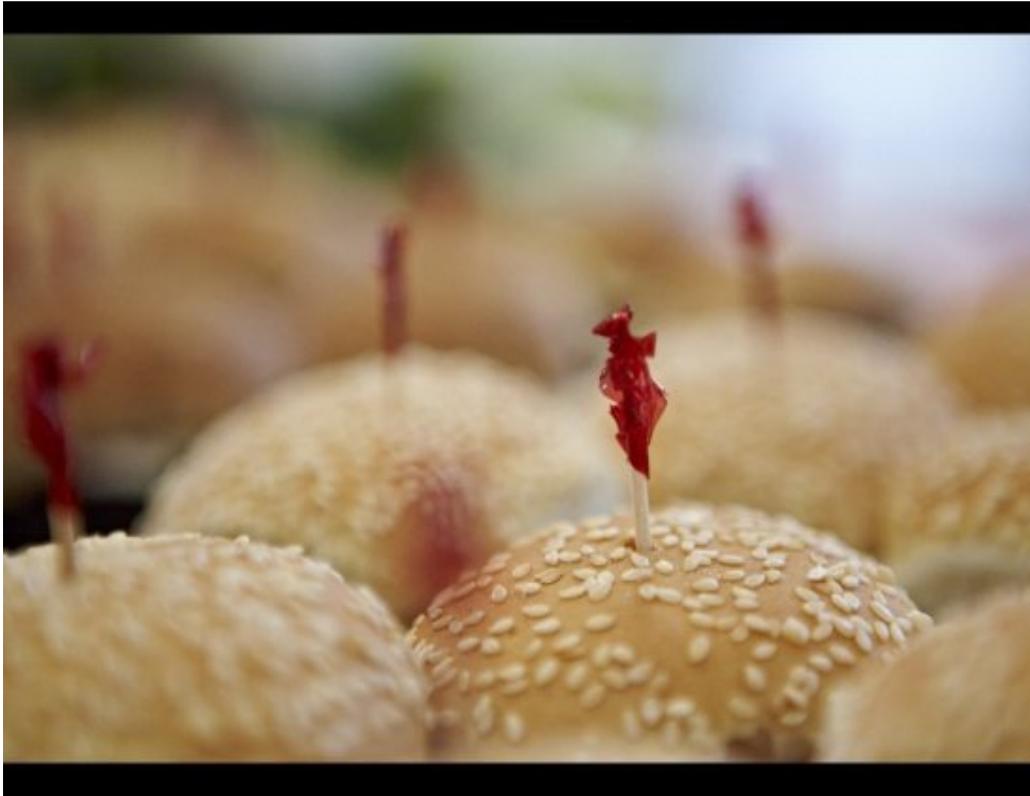
Chef Cory preparing stewed collard greens and ham hock.



Vodka, galliano, raspberry juice and champagne.



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Vegetarian mushroom burger, grass feed beef burger and spicy seared albacore tuna burger.



Dragon fruit and tequila cocktail.



Preparing California white sea bass tostada.



Chef Cory preparing California white sea bass tostada.





Blackberry infused vodka martini garnished with edible nasturtium flowers.





Hostess and chef pose with President Obama and Mitt Romney.



Photographer and chef pose with President Obama and Mitt Romney.