

Co-Ed Showers



PLANNING A BABY SHOW ISN'T EXACTLY LIKE PLANNING A WEDDING, BUT IT HAS CHALLENGES AND TRENDS ALL ITS OWN.

BY CELENE
MCDERMOTT

THE LATEST? INVITING THE DAD AND OTHER MALE FOLK

The cake is made of diapers; the tablecloth and wallpaper are full of geometric shapes and alphabet blocks; a man is wearing a huge pacifier around his neck while racing his friends in diaper-changing relay races. Other men are eating wings and nachos and drinking spiked punch from baby bottles, competing with each other to see who can drink the quickest. "Dads Gone Wild?" Not exactly; they're just excited to be part of a New York baby shower.

Baby showers are no longer just about the mom-to-be: according to New York City event planners, his-and-hers baby showers are becoming increasingly popular in the area. Stacia Holley, owner of the New Jersey-based Parties by Princess, noted that about 75 percent of the baby showers she has

planned this year have been organized by the future father, either alone or together with his wife, and can also include male guests in the festivities.

"It's become a couples thing," explained Emily Lester, owner of Em Event Management, a Manhattan-based event company. "I rarely have an all-female baby shower. Dads in New York are really getting into it and are very involved, and there are other dads who come. It's not, 'Oh, this is a girly thing,' it's now, 'This is really cool, we're having a family!'"

Shawn Rabideau, founder of the Manhattan-based Event Ergonomics, agreed that more men are getting in on the baby shower action. Rabideau, who has been a featured event planner on ABC's "Good Morning America" and "The View," attributed the increased

male presence in the shower process to such factors as more dads staying at home or moms and dads splitting their time taking care of the kids.

Kenny Eicher, a father of two who, along with his wife, was recently thrown a co-ed baby shower in midtown, believes that an important role for any partner is to plan for the baby together, and that includes the baby shower. "I feel that it's a time to celebrate the pending birth of your child, and [a shower is] an event not to be missed for any parent," he said.

Melinda Orlic-Katsiris of Consider it Done, a personal assistant and special events planning company based in New York, San Francisco and Aspen, notes that she is seeing more co-ed showers in urban areas. "Our largest office is New York, so it's our test case

scenario. We're definitely seeing it here, but our clients have many different homes in different places, so it's a trend there as well," she says.

Even if men do not attend the festivities, they can definitely get involved in planning the event for women as well.

Separate Celebrations for the Prospective Mom and Dad

Not every prospective mother wants to have a male presence at the party, and it seems that all-female showers are just as popular. Liza Hart, manager of Alice's Tea Cup, a restaurant that hosts about two to three baby showers per weekend at each of its three locations on the Upper East Side and Upper West Side, said that she has never seen a co-ed shower. But Hart noted that her "Alice in Wonderland"-themed restaurants are "girly," adding, "I don't know how many men would really want to come to a tea party."

Justine McEnerney, an expectant mom who recently was thrown a shower on the Upper East Side for her first child, also thought that men might be uncomfortable with "womanly" things being discussed. "I suggested to my husband that he plan something separate for the guys," she said. "The men went out to lunch together, while the women came to my shower."

Separate celebrations can give the dad-to-be and his close friends an opportunity to bond together and become excited about fatherhood. It has become common for the men to present the dad-to-be with fun "gag" gifts, such as pain relievers, earplugs and items that remind him of his fatherly duties, as well as cute Yankees or Mets clothing that he may be excited about for the baby.

Matching the Shower to the Family

Ultimately, the decision whether or not to host a co-ed shower is up to the family, but planners also should keep in mind that the celebration is about the

BABY SHOWER GIFTS

By Joy Sherwood



Stokke
Xplory Stroller
Starts as a Bassinet and later turns into a toddler stroller
\$999
Available at: Babies R Us
24-30 Union Square East
212.798.9905



Coach
Diaper Bag in Scribble Fabric with Suede and Leather Trim
Matching Diaper Changing Pad
\$348
www.coach.com



Tiffany & Co.
Man in the Moon
Rattle in Sterling Silver
\$150
Available at: Tiffany & Co.
727 Fifth Avenue, 212.755.8000



Jacadi
Sleep Time Set
Hand Embroidered Fleece Blanket and Teddy Bear in a Gift Box
\$92
Available at: www.jacadiusa.com
Or a Retail Store Near You



Elegant Baby
Medical Kit
Includes nasal aspirator, thermometer, teething ring, nail clipper, medicine spoon and brush and comb
\$24
Available at: Giggle
1033 Lexington Avenue, 212.249.4249
120 Wooster Street, 212.334.5817

family as a whole, and this may also include showers for second, third and fourth births. For example, the couple may need sex-specific items if they have already had a girl and are now having a boy for the first time. Even if the second baby is the same sex, they still may need new things. Every birth is now being celebrated.

Planners emphasize that the shower must, above all, be matched to the couple. Planners should realize that throwing a shower for the parents-to-be is a generous gift in itself and a celebration of a new life. It will be a special memory they will never forget.

Six Things to Keep in Mind When Planning a Unique, Memorable Baby Shower:

1 Do not feel locked into a particular style. Baby showers can be as large and extravagant or as small and intimate as your budget and taste allow.



Consider what is most important to the couple and who the guests are. Is a women-only brunch more appropriate, or does the couple want to include the men in a less traditional backyard barbecue or luau? Consult the couple to get their feedback.

2 Include decorations that also can serve as gifts to the parents-to-be.

“Create the décor so that there are elements that the parents can take home and use after the baby’s born,” Rabideau said. Consider these tips:

- Include the colors of the nursery. Colors and textures always work well and can be incorporated into the nursery after the baby is born.

- Make a diaper cake (see picture). Roll up diapers to serve as cake slices and use washcloths and baby clothes for the layers of the cake. If you don’t want to make one yourself, consider ordering one from Roxie’s Shop (www.roxiesshop.com) in

Staten Island.

- Instead of regular tablecloths for the tables, use baby blankets.

- Instead of regular napkin holders, use teething rings, rattles or pacifiers.

- Consider giving children’s books with a special message inside in lieu



Resources For Planning A Baby Shower

Where to Register

Buy Buy Baby

Features nursery and children’s furniture, infant and convertible car seats, booster seats, strollers, clothing and accessories, toys and a complete book and audio/visual department. 270 Seventh Avenue, 917-344-1555, www.buybuybaby.com.

Babies R Us

Features a wide selection of products including cribs and furniture, car seats, strollers, toys, bedding, and clothing for small infants through size 48 months. 24 Union Square East, 212-798-9905, www.toysrus.com.

Pottery Barn Kids

Contains bedding, furniture, rugs, accessories,

shelving, baby clothing, playrooms and toys. 1311 Second Avenue, 212-879-4746, www.potterybarnkids.com.

Gap Kids

Features baby clothing, accessories and baby gift sets. Several locations in Manhattan, www.gap.com.

The Children’s Place

Features quality clothing and accessories at an unmatched value for girls and boys sizes newborn to 14. Also features bath items. Several locations in Manhattan, www.childrensplace.com.

Gymboree

Carries stylish, high-quality children’s clothing and accessories in sizes newborn to age 12. Several locations in Manhattan, www.gymboree.com.

Where to Throw the Shower

Penthouse 15 and Loft 11

These indoor and outdoor lofts feature rooftop

decks and 360-degree views of the city. There also are other rooms to rent, depending on the size of the party. 336 West 37th Street, 212-871-0940, www.lofteleven.com.

The Harold Pratt House & Peterson Hall

This elegant townhouse, which dates back to 1919, hosts receptions, weddings and special events. Smaller rooms can accommodate up to 50 people, and the entire house can be rented out for a standard fee on the weekends. 58 East 68th Street, 212-434-9576, www.prattmansion.com.

The Boathouse in Central Park

Holds showers for up to 25 people on the weekends in the Boathouse Restaurant. East 72nd Street and Park Drive North, 212-517-2233, www.thecentralparkboathouse.com.

King’s Carriage House

This cozy carriage house features three private rooms and all-inclusive packages. 251 East 82nd Street, 212-734-5490, www.kingscarriagehouse.com.

of a traditional card, or use children's books as placemats.

3 Consider a theme and assign tasks to make things simple.

Themes are a great way to personalize the shower and include the couple's favorite toys or characters from childhood. They can be traditional, such as animals, storks, shapes, baby bottles and nursery rhymes; or nontraditional, such as luaus, Asian themes, and characters like Mickey and Minnie Mouse, Precious Moments and Winnie the Pooh. No theme is off-limits.

"The theme makes things easier to find. It's something to work with," said Jeanne-Marie McEnerney, who planned her sister Justine's baby shower at King's Carriage House on East 82nd Street. She recommended that planners split up tasks accordingly so no one person feels overwhelmed.

4 Plan interactive games to keep everyone connected and having fun. Here are some suggestions that will go over well with both the women and the men, no matter what kind of shower you decide to have:

- Have guests tell a childhood memory or give parenting advice. It connects everyone in the room and can be amusing and meaningful for all.
- Diaper-changing relay races, "Bobbing for Baby Bottles," baby-photo guessing contests, "Baby Bingo" and "Baby Pictionary" are enjoyable and interactive.
- If the dad-to-be is there as well, have the expectant parents open the gifts together.
- Award sex-appropriate prizes like gift certificates to keep guests entertained.

5 Encourage the couple to register.

Seventy-five percent of people register for a baby shower, according to Lester. "It's a growing trend, and it makes sense. It takes the guessing out of what the parents-to-be really need and want, and it helps avoid getting duplicates," she said. Lester recommends these tactics for upcoming parents:

- Register for generic items that you

Maremma Trattoria Toscana

For a Tuscan touch this popular West Village eatery offers an airy, sky-lit upstairs room for parties up to 75 people, or a private dining area for parties of 25 or more behind sliding wood-paneled doors. 228 West 10th Street, 212-645-0200, www.maremmayc.com.

Milk & Cookies Bakery

This bakery nestled in the West Village features cookie decorating, ice cream socials and baby shower favors and can accommodate up to 17 people. 19 Commerce Street, 212-243-1640, www.milkandcookiesbakery.com.

Alice's Teacup

Features baby shower packages, Mad Hatter tea service, teacup favors with pink or blue personalized ribbons, tiered baby block cakes, party books and more. Several locations in Manhattan, 212-799-3006, www.Alicesteacup.com.

Battery Gardens

This waterfront restaurant features panoramic views of New York Harbor and both indoor and outdoor event space. Inside Battery Park (opposite 17 State Street), 212-809-5508, www.batterygardens.com.

Rainbow Room

Several Art Deco-style private rooms offer spectacular views of the city for intimate parties of a minimum of 10 guests. 30 Rockefeller Plaza, 212-632-5000, www.rainbowroom.com.

Tavern on the Green

This magical garden and six distinct rooms overlook Central Park and can accommodate parties of 20 guests or more. Central Park at West 67th Street, 212-873-3200, www.tavernonthegreen.com.

New-York Historical Society

Offers six rooms for rent that can accommodate 30 to 250 people. 170 Central Park West, 212-873-3400, www.nyhistory.org.



YMCA

Features several private event spaces that hold a minimum of 50 people. Several locations in Manhattan, www.ymcanyc.org.

Riverbank State Park

At Riverbank State Park, up to five picnic tables can be reserved for the event (fees vary depending on the number of tables reserved). There is a large green open space, which is shared by all users of the picnic area. Picnic tables can be decorated. An elegant indoor restaurant is also available at the park for a catered event. 679 Riverside Drive, 212-694-3600, www.nysparks.state.ny.us/parks

When to Hire an Event Planner

For moms short on time who are considering an intricate or large baby shower, an event planner may be the way to go. "The event planner's job is to take away the stress," Holley explained.

Event Ergonomics

Shawn Rabideau 212-695-7881, www.eventergonomics.com, Shawn@eventergonomics.com.

EM Event Management

Emily Lester 212-695-7881, www.emnyc.com, EMLC@verizon.net.

Parties by Princess

Stacia Holley 646-546-8017, www.partiesbyprincess.com, partiesbyprincess@gmail.com.

Celebrate Flowers

Jorge Cazzorla, 212-736-2102, www.celebrateflowers.com, Jorge@celebrateflowers.com.

Consider It Done

Melinda Orlie-Katsiris www.consideritdone.com 212-683-6280

—By Celene McDermott

know you will need.

- Register for inexpensive things that people can afford to give you as a gift. It's okay to have some expensive items on your registry — many times people will chip in together for your \$300 stroller — but include smaller items that people can give individually.

- Register for clothes beyond 1 to 6 months, because the baby will grow into them.

- Keep seasons in mind. If the baby is born in the summer, he/she will need winter clothes in bigger sizes.

- Consider that the furniture and

larger items from the registry can be delivered right to your home, and smaller items can be opened at the shower.

6 Consider giving a toast to the mom and/or dad-to-be or giving a blessing to the new baby.

After all, you are there to celebrate the baby entering the world and the couple's addition to their family. Moms-to-be like McEnerney and dads-to-be like Eicher remember the toast and blessing as one of the most special moments. ♦