

# bayou city

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**MANDY BENNETT**

People eat with their eyes, so if it doesn't look good...they probably won't try it.



**JONNY BLACK**

The right music and entertainment will make or break your event. Choose wisely.



# Who's Planning Your Party?

*Five event pros share their tried-and-true tips on throwing the party of the season*

**BY** BETSY DENSON

**MANDY BENNETT**

Caterer, D'Lish Catering

Head of her catering company since 2004, Bennett prides herself on "bringing something different" to clients such as Kelsey-Seybold and the Houston Rodeo. She says the best types of appetizers for home holiday parties are room temperature choices to make it easy on the host, and that serving food in smaller dishes—replenishing from the kitchen as needed—helps keep food fresh. Bennett also emphasizes presentation. "People 'eat with their eyes,' so if it doesn't look good enough to eat, then they probably won't try it."

**JONNY BLACK**

DJ, Jonny Black Productions

Numerous brides and grooms, as well as corporate clients like Shell Oil, BP and Schlumberger, have tapped Jonny Black to emcee and DJ their events. As for the perfect playlist, Black says if the event has a theme, the music should match—and ideally be playing as the guests arrive. "This will set the mood for a fun night." It's also essential to pick songs that resonate with most guests. "Don't Stop Believing" by Journey and "Shout" from "Animal House" are some crowd favorites.

**REBEKAH JOHNSON**

Florist, Bergner and Johnson Design

From The Menil 25th anniversary gala to parties in the Caribbean, Rebekah Johnson's one-of-a-kind take on floral design and event décor is in demand. And for her own gatherings? "I use clippings from my yard, etched glass champagne cups and lots of candles." When buying flowers, Johnson suggests amassing a lot of one thing, both type and color, for more impact. "For Christmas, I like to incorporate things like peppermint candies glued into a wreath for a whimsical look or cinnamon for a traditional look."



Scan page with Layar for more from these experts.



“ **REBEKAH JOHNSON**  
Get a whole lot of one thing. It has more of an impact.



**WYN BOMAR**  
Closing the envelope with a wax seal will add a special touch.



“ **SAMANTHA DARR**  
Throw the tradition book out the window. It's the 21st century. There is no right or wrong way.

### **SAMANTHA DARR**

Event planner, Soiréebliss! Events

With a background in interior design and an eye for detail, Samantha Darr was a natural at event planning before starting her own company in 2008. Among her tips for at-home holiday parties: Clear the room of unnecessary furniture and accent tables to create more open space. She also recommends a valet service for guests. “It will naturally elevate the formality of the celebration. As an extra sweet surprise, have the valet attendant place a box of chocolates or late night snack in the guests’ vehicle.”

### **WYN BOMAR**

Invitation designer, Wyn Bomar Design

Twenty-five years of design experience gives Wyn Bomar a leg up in collaborating with clients like Camp for All and the Houston Public Library Foundation to craft just the right invite. She says that while a streamlined theme is the key to a successful invitation, there are also a lot of options in the realm of traditional printing. “I like to use a fun paper, a funky envelope,” she says and suggests shopping for the envelope first, then sizing the invitation to fit. Closing the envelope with a wax seal will add a special touch. ❖

### **Soiréebliss! Events**

627 W. 19th St. 832-303-9537, [soireebliss.com](http://soireebliss.com)

### **Bergner and Johnson Design**

519 Pecore St. 713-662-3769, [bergnerandjohnson.com](http://bergnerandjohnson.com)

### **D'Lish Catering**

1200 McKinney St. 281-953-5474, [dlish.net](http://dlish.net)

### **Jonny Black Productions**

11211 Katy Freeway. 832-867-6911, [jonnyblackproductions.com](http://jonnyblackproductions.com)

### **Wyn Bomar Design**

281-300-6413, [wynbomardesign.com](http://wynbomardesign.com)