



WANT A PARTY?

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How to Plan an Affordable Bar/Bat Mitzvah Celebration

A bar or bat mitzvah is an important rite of passage for a young Jewish person, and the party that follows the ceremony should be an event to remember. Such events can get expensive, though, so parents will need to stick to a budget and look for creative ways to plan an affordable celebration.

Steps:

1. Finalize the dates and times of the ceremony and celebration. You'll need to discuss this with your rabbi or the administrator of your congregation well in advance, since some dates may not be available or appropriate for a bar or bat mitzvah.
2. Set a firm budget for the celebration. This will affect the size of your guest list, your choice of venue and the type of party you decide to have.
3. Reserve the hall or room where the celebration will be held. Start searching for an appropriate venue early, since the locations offering the best value will be booked well ahead of other locations.
4. Decide what sort of food and beverages you'll provide. Will the celebration include a full sit-down meal? Finger foods? Remember that table service usually costs more than a buffet, and that alcohol is often one of the costliest parts of any celebration.
5. Consider preparing the food yourself. This will be possible only if you're having a small celebration or if you can enlist a lot of friends and relatives to help out, but it can be a great way to save money.
6. Plan to decorate the location yourself. This will almost certainly be cheaper than getting the caterer or event coordinator to do it for you.
7. Consider delegating photography and videotaping duties to reliable friends or relatives rather than hiring professional photographers. You'll need to purchase lots of film in advance and cover all developing charges, but this will still be cheaper than hiring a professional.
8. Plan the order of events carefully. Will there be speeches? A dance? A presentation of some kind? If there will be speeches and music, remember to factor in the cost of a microphone and sound system or DJ service.

Tips:

Confirm all your arrangements during the week before the celebration to make sure everything goes smoothly.

Remember that some of the invited guests will not be able to attend; take this into account when discussing the size of the celebration with caterers and other service providers.

If you're serving alcohol, consider limiting it to beer and wine, which is less expensive than offering a full bar.

Warnings:

When you book a location, find out what, if any, restrictions will be placed on your party. Some hotels require you to use their own catering services, and rules about who provides the alcohol may vary as well. Some locations will allow you to hire a band, while others may restrict you to recorded music.

If your best friend's cousin's garage band offers to perform for free, be sure to audition the group first. Free is good, but you don't want your guests to run screaming from the hall if the music is terrible.