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# Scene

## CELEBRATIONS SCENE DEBI LILLY

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### PARTIES EUROPEAN STYLE



You've been dreaming of an overseas getaway, but can't take off the time. No worries, because you can bring a little of Europe to your celebrations here in the States. Put some wow into your next party, with these easy tips for some British-and Italian-inspired revelry, motivated by an opulent party we recently threw, The Bentley and Lamborghini Gold Coast grand re-opening event, *Cocktails and Couture*, with proceeds benefitting the Joffrey Ballet. Two of the world's finest cars provided the backdrop, but the food (provided by Jewell Catering and Events), drink and décor were what made the celebration *delizioso, easy-peasy...*and doable for your next party. So, what will it be—London or Rome?

#### A JUMP ACROSS THE POND

An English affair doesn't start with afternoon tea and end with meat pies. No, an elegant, enjoyable menu is within reach and surprisingly light. And it all starts with the perfect English cocktail. Get your knickers on right with a sprightly Pimm's Cup. This gin-based beverage is made with one part Pimm's No. 1, two parts ginger ale, and garnished with refreshing slices of lime and cucumber. Blinding! (That means fabulously successful for those of you not privy to British slang.)

Next, serve up a round of English hors d'oeuvres. Break out your vintage lace tablecloths and napkins, or buy some inexpensive doilies, and place them on antique silver trays with nibbles on top. Create perfect English ambience with boxwood topiaries on your tabletop and at your bar, and with linens and napkins in a palette of camel, white and forest green. Prim and elegant.

Wonderful English edibles include:

- The classic Stilton and fresh, crisp apple slices (cut and serve)
- Mini-tarts with smoked salmon and a dollop of crème fraîche (buy the shells in your grocer's freezer section, the rest in the refrigerated section and assemble—voilà! You're done)
- Sweet bacon-wrapped breadsticks (buy boxed breadsticks, roll each one in a slice of bacon, sprinkle with brown sugar and bake for 30 minutes at 350°)

Serve a main course of traditional fish and chips, with malt vinegar, tartar sauce and ketchup. Or, authentic yellow curry with chicken, cauliflower and baby peas, served over basmati rice and accompanied with dried currants, golden raisins, toasted coconut, chopped cashews and mango chutney. Finish the evening off with individual English trifles,

made with layers of pound cake, lemon cream and fresh strawberries and served in clear plastic glasses, and your British invasion is complete.

#### BELLA ITALIA

If Italy is occupying your travel daydreams, do like the Italians and celebrate with a feast of delicious goodness. Say *Ciao, bella* with a Prosecco Bellini. Italy's answer to Champagne is bubbly and more affordable than its French counterpart. Combine one part peach nectar with five parts of Prosecco, and garnish with a fresh peach slice.

Next, top your best and brightest metallic serving pieces with Italian hors d'oeuvres. Create a modern, Italian look with lush yellow florals, and crisp black-and-white napkins tabletop and bar-side:

- Grilled portobello mushroom fingers, wrapped in fresh basil leaf and drizzled with vinaigrette and a little Pecorino Romano (slice mushrooms, wrap in basil leaf, drizzle, sprinkle, done)
- Fontina cheese and fresh pear slices (cut and serve)
- Prosciutto-wrapped melon slices with fresh mint (cut, wrap and serve)

And dinner? Serve up a festive Italian buffet with more black-and-white linens, modern plates and servingware. Take the irresistible pizza and pasta to the next level, because, really, what is better? Authentic, thin-crust pizzas made on pizza stones are easy and limitless in their possibilities. Top with lemon-pesto shrimp, olive oil and Parmesan. Or prosciutto and arugula. Or the classic Margherita, with fresh mozzarella, tomato sauce and basil leaves!

Pasta dishes sing, like baby penne with Italian sausage, leeks and roasted orange peppers and as risotto martini with shrimp, yellow tomatoes, asparagus, fresh basil and a white wine, herb and shallot sauce. End the evening with cappuccino gelato, served with fresh whipped cream and dark chocolate sauce in petite glasses.

#### Bellissimo! scene

Debi Lilly is president of A Perfect Event, a Chicago-based national event-planning firm. Debi serves as an industry expert for InStyle Magazine, Martha Stewart Weddings, InStyle Weddings, Chicago Social and Chicago Magazine, among others. She has a faithful and well-known following, including Oprah Winfrey, among many other high profile clientele. For more information, visit [Aperfectevent.com](http://Aperfectevent.com).