

impress for less



By Christina Vercelletto

5 TOP CHEFS DISH ON HOW TO SAVE ON ENTERTAINING

HAVE YOU EVER been in the mood to host a get-together, but tallying the cost made you pull the plug? We asked five celebrity chefs helping top restaurants at Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa in Atlantic City their advice on throwing an amazing party on a budget. Turns out, it's utterly doable. So whether you're thinking sit-down dinner or a casual gathering, get ready to impress for less.

MICHAEL SCHULSON

Chef and partner, Izakaya

Bring out the punch bowl "I love large-format cocktails for parties I'm hosting," Schulson says. One of his favorites is a concoction he came up with dubbed the Whiskey Scorpion Bowl. "It's easy to make and relatively inexpensive, as it includes only four ingredients: whiskey, apple cider, caramel and lemon," he says. "Not only is it delicious, but the presentation is a great conversation starter too."

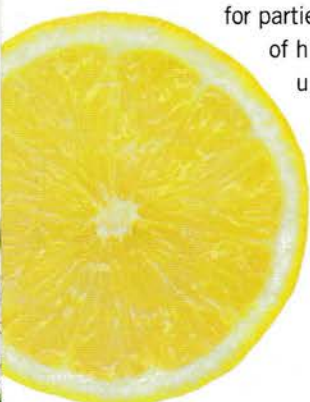


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BOBBY FLAY

Chef and partner,
Bobby Flay Steak

Identify the “wow” factor

“Wake up guests with impactful ingredients,” Flay says.

Certain foods and seasonings bring savory excitement to dishes at a low cost, especially because a little goes a long way. The top three, says Flay, are cheese, garlic and black pepper. Other ideas include sesame oil and honey vinegar. “Oh, and everyone loves bacon!” he adds. If you’re hosting seafood fanatics, don’t shy away from anchovies. “Anchovies are the bacon of the sea,” he says. If you can work two wow ingredients into the same dish, even better. Flay recommends: roasted cauliflower sauteed with eggs, Parmesan and bacon, and spaghetti carbonara with extra freshly ground black pepper.



Photo credit: Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa



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GEOFFREY ZAKARIAN

Culinary lifestyle consultant, The Water Club

Consider your guests That sounds obvious, but often we get wrapped up in trying to replicate menus from such high-end eateries as Le Bernardin when our friends are more local-diner types. “Know your audience,” says Zakarian. If you really think about your friends’ favorite foods and drinks, you may well find you can send them home smiling without pushing up against your credit card limit.

Remember: Less is more “Fewer things at a higher quality make a much better impact than a smorgasbord of so-so dishes,” says Zakarian. “It’s also much easier when serving a large group.” Don’t overthink things. Instead, commit to a few choice selections. “A cocktail party built around quality caviar, a magnum of champagne and a few great wines can’t fail,” he says. “And magnums store and age better than bottles.”



MICHAEL SYMON

Chef and partner, Angeline

Reimagine pasta It’s hard to beat on cost as a main dish, but pasta “can also be impressive if you make it seasonal and different,” says Symon. “Seasonal ingredients will make it taste the best and cost the least.”

He suggests butternut squash, brown butter and sage in pot-sticker wrappers, or macaroni and cheese made special. Think add-ins such as crabmeat or mushrooms, or a recipe made extra luscious with three cheeses, say, Cheddar, Gouda and mozzarella, or Gruyère, Fontina and ricotta.

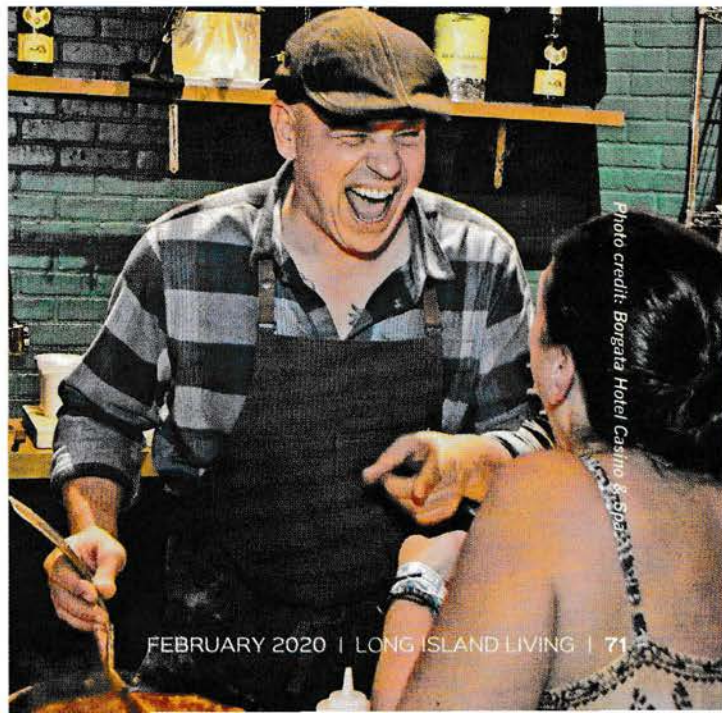
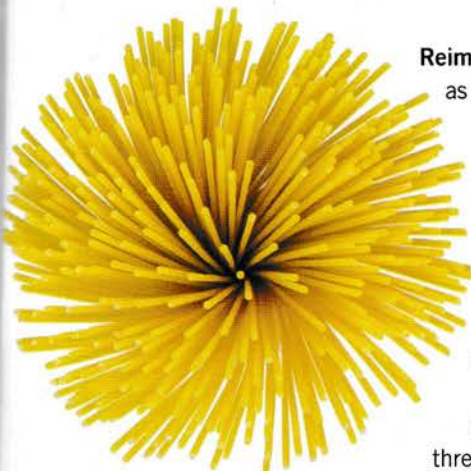


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WOLFGANG PUCK

Chef and partner Wolfgang Puck American Grille

Go big with fish A way to get around the relatively high price of seafood at a dinner party is to serve several whole fish, family style. It works out to be less costly than individual fillets — and makes for a fancier presentation. Puck recommends whole striped bass. The stripes lend eye appeal to the plate, and it's a fairly inexpensive, buttery-tasting fish with few bones. "Surround it with cherry bell peppers and small potatoes, and put salad greens under the bass," he says.

Go small on plates Small bites are having a moment, and Puck is a fan. They lend themselves nicely to mixing and mingling. Even better: you can serve them on the cheap and thrill guests. "Mini grilled cheese with a ramekin of lobster bisque for dipping is a crowd-pleaser," Puck says. Small prime-rib panini with Russian dressing, sweet and sour baby shrimp and small bowls of cauliflower risotto also feel like splurges yet are affordable. This approach

works well for desserts too, in the form of mini cheesecakes or mascarpone dip with

plantain chips or cinnamon-sugar pita chips (Puck likes Terra or Stacy's). *LIL*

Christina Vercelletto, a lifelong Long Islander, is a travel and beauty writer based in Babylon.



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The five celebrity chefs with assistants at the Borgata Hotel.



Photo credit: Borgata Hotel Casino & Spa