



*Light up a summer night with a dazzling chandelier under a clear tent.*



BY SARA PEREZ WEBBER

# MORE FUN IN THE SUN

10 ways to add extra fun and flair to your outdoor events

Spring and summer are here, bringing more events to the great outdoors. With their carefree ambience, occasions under the sun and stars invite fun activities and whimsical décor, as shown in these 10 winning ideas from caterers, event planners and venues.



## OUTDOOR CHANDELIERS

Add some bling to the great outdoors with a chandelier, suggests Kevin Dennis, owner of Fantasy Sound Event Services in Livermore, Calif., and a certified wedding planner. "Outdoor chandeliers are an amazing light installation for those summery evening receptions, especially when paired with delicate string lights!" says Dennis. "These fixtures can be installed in reception tents, or attached to a surrounding tree to illuminate the venue grounds for more of a late-night party vibe."

●●● [fantasysound.com](http://fantasysound.com)

PHOTO BY CLASSIC PHOTOGRAPHERS



## A COOL WARM RECEPTION

Roots Catering in Charlotte, N.C., extends a warm welcome to outdoor event guests with a tradition designed to cool them off. "We line up our staff at the entrance of the event with cool, aromatic towels for guests to wipe their hands or brow, and it immediately makes them feel relaxed and welcomed," says Kellyn Stamey, vice president of sales and development. "We also know the first place everyone looks for is the bar, so to be greeted with a Cucumber Basil Spritzer or even a simple glass of champagne takes the pressure off and gets the party started." ●●● [roots-catering.com](http://roots-catering.com)





## PROSECCO FLOAT BOOZY POPS

**YIELD:** 12 servings

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup simple syrup
- 2 cups orange juice
- 1 cup grapefruit juice
- 1 tablespoon fresh lemon juice
- 2 bottles prosecco

### METHOD

1. Mix together the orange, grapefruit and lemon juices, then add the simple syrup.
2. Pour the mixture into the popsicle molds, and place in the freezer for 2 to 3 hours. After 2 hours, check the molds. If the pops are frozen, insert a stick in each, and place back in the freezer for an additional 8 to 10 hours.
3. Prepare 12 stemless martini glasses, and fill each ¼ full with prosecco. Set aside.
4. When fully frozen, to remove the pops from the molds, gently run under warm water, take the pops out, and serve upside-down in each glass.

## BOOZY ICE POPS

Ice pops for grown-ups are a "huge hit" at outdoor summer soirees and weddings, says Andrea Correale, founder and president of Elegant Affairs (serving New York City, the Hamptons and the Gold Coast of Long Island). Her Prosecco Float Boozy Pops (see recipe) are "fun, delicious and super-simple to make, which makes them great for parties of every size. A delicious, light and refreshing dessert!"

●●● elegantaffairscaterers.com



## LIVE-FIRE COOKING

Everyone loves a barbecue, with outdoor cooking adding entertainment and tempting aromas to any event. The Live Fire menu is a popular choice at Long Meadow Ranch in St. Helena, Calif., the heart of Napa Valley. Groups of at least 80 can book this family-style option, in which chefs prepare all day for a feast that includes such options as a whole-roasted heritage pig, heritage St. Louis ribs or grass-fed lamb (for Chef Stephen Barber's grilled T-bone lamb chops recipe, see p. 54). "Guests lean towards this menu because it adds the element of interacting with the chefs as well as the excitement of watching your meal being prepared right in front of you by a renowned culinary team," says Rebecca Carr, director of event sales at Long Meadow Ranch. ●●● longmeadowranch.com





## ORNATE SEATING AREAS

One of the most popular trends for an outdoor event is the use of ornate chairs and decorative couches, according to Kylie Carlson, owner of the International Academy of Wedding & Event Planning. "Luxury rental pieces with a touch of art deco really provide a sophisticated juxtaposition with natural floral and greenery elements," says Carlson. "This outdoor setup is the perfect seating arrangement for a reception, especially as the party extends into the evening hours." ●●● [weddingacademyglobal.com](http://weddingacademyglobal.com)



## ON-THE-SPOT POETRY

Add a bit of culture to your next outdoor affair with a performance artist. At events at 1 Hotel South Beach in Miami Beach, Fla.—including on its private beach—guests may find The Biscayne Poet (aka Oscar Fuentes) with his vintage typewriter, composing personalized odes on the spot. He's also featured at the hotel's monthly Shake-speare Poetry Hour. Guests "line up for their chance to sit with him for their own poem—they love having that experiential and cultural moment with a local poet," says Julia Cavaliere, 1 Hotel South Beach's marketing manager. ●●● [1hotels.com/south-beach](http://1hotels.com/south-beach)

"With an outdoor event, it's important that food stations can be mobile, in case of inclement weather."

—Craig Barbour, owner and chef of Roots Catering

## MOBILE POP-UP STATIONS

Live cooking demonstrations are a crowd-pleasing option served up by Roots Catering in Charlotte, N.C. The company designed a traveling cart with a spit roaster attached, so chefs can hand-carve meat in front of guests at Roots' Taco Al Pastor Pop-Up Station and Lamb Gyro Pop-Up Station. "With an outdoor event, it's important that food stations can be mobile, in case of inclement weather," says Craig Barbour, owner and chef. "They also work well with large outdoor events because you can move the food to meet the guests as the crowd moves. It's great to be able to follow the party." ●●● [roots-catering.com](http://roots-catering.com)





## NATURE- ENHANCED BACKDROPS

Adding natural elements to a backdrop outdoors will make it even more Instagram-worthy, according to Kevin Dennis, owner of Fantasy Sound Event Services in Livermore, Calif., and a certified wedding planner. "Photo booths aren't going anywhere any time soon, but we will see a more elaborate take on outdoor set-ups," says Dennis. "Couples love the idea of a wooden backdrop embellished with florals and greenery, even installations fixed above a seating area." ●●● fantasysound.com



LEFT PHOTO BY KATE ANFINSON PHOTOGRAPHY;  
TOP PHOTO BY ASHLEY MAXWELL PHOTOGRAPHY



## MAKE-YOUR-OWN PIXIE STICKS

Kids and kids-at-heart flock to the Candy Art station from Picnics Plus!, a division of Mintahoe Catering & Events in Minneapolis. Guests can choose from two dozen colorful flavored powders to mix-and-match in their own candy tubes. "Everyone is doing sand art, so we wanted to do something different: Candy Art—it's sand you can eat!" says Steve Palmer, sales consultant at Picnics Plus!. "Everyone loves it, especially the kids!" ●●● mintahoe.com



## DO-IT-YOURSELF DESSERTS

Creative twists on classic desserts that keep guests cool—and that guests can customize themselves—are a big hit in the summer months, according to Heather Jones, catering sales director at Wente Vineyards in Livermore, Calif. "For example, a deconstructed version of the banana split has been a fan favorite, with frozen bananas dipped in chocolate and served with toppings rather than ice cream," says Jones, adding that the donut wall trend "has made a graceful exit." ●●● wentevineyards.com

BOTTOM PHOTO BY SUNSHOWER PHOTOGRAPHY