

# Burnout-free showers for a new generation

By Marni Jameson

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Most women go through a phase, somewhere between ages 20 and 35, when they're deluged with shower invitations. Friends are getting married and having babies as if men and babies were 70 percent off at the outlet mall. You can get sick from all that joy.

I'm beyond that phase, but when I was in the heat of it, I received most shower invitations with the same sentiment: Not another shower! It wasn't that I didn't want to celebrate my friends' rites of passage. I just didn't want to stomach another afternoon of mindless chatter, of women comparing diamond rings and houses, and of humiliating games like toilet paper bride. (Divide into teams and, using toilet paper, craft a wedding dress onto some otherwise self-respecting woman, who then goes straight into therapy.)

Showers are especially miserable for women who are not married and want to be, or miserably married and don't want to be, or newly divorced, or not pregnant and want to be, or pregnant and don't want to be, which, let's be honest, covers about 80 percent of women in that age group. Back then, the only way I could get through a shower without shooting myself was with a handful of Advil and a lobotomy.

Fast forward a decade. I'm over shower burnout. So over it, in fact, that the minute I learned my daughter's flute teacher was expecting her first child, I put dibs on throwing her a shower—because I wanted to. Also because I realized—I think this is called maturity—that helping a new bride or mom start out with a few gifts and the support of friends and family is still a worthy effort.

What made that good idea go bad was when the new mom's registry included a Prada stroller and a Gucci diaper bag, or when the new bride had so many showers they

needed categorizing (kitchen shower, bedroom shower, personal shower. I was once invited to a Christmas shower, just for holiday decorations. Does anyone else think that at times like those someone needs to call the shower police?

But all that was when I lived in Orange County, Calif., which explains a lot. Now I live among the semi-sane in Colorado, and over time have relearned this: Celebrating life matters. We graduate. We marry. We have babies. I want to honor it all. I just don't want to get a migraine doing it.

Although many websites and magazines will lure you into thinking showers should be a much bigger to-do than they need be, don't be lured. Here's how to host a shower minus the burnout:

- **Set the bar at basic.** Too much is too much. Think elegant but simple, and focus on what matters: Getting the bride or new mom off to a good start with gifts and good wishes. Find the sweet spot between a nice afternoon and a Las Vegas Review.
- **Edit the guest list.** People who already know each other make the best get-togethers. Consider separate, smaller showers for co-workers, sorority sisters, family and close friends. Mixing those groups can be a recipe for awkwardness. The shower I hosted was for female flute students and their moms. It clicked.
- **E-Vite.** Send a save-the-date announcement, followed by a printed mailed invitation. This gives guests two ways to RSVP, by email or phone. Though many sadly still won't, that increases the chances they will. Cute and reasonably priced invitations are available [beautifulbabyshowers.com](http://beautifulbabyshowers.com).
- **Feed and release.** Assume your guests have a life. Let them honor the bride or mother to be, have a bite to eat, attend the gift opening and get on with their day. Don't drag it out.
- **Skip the games.** Hostesses often feel they need games to help people mix. (As if a group of women ever convened who couldn't hold up a conversation.) If you follow steps one and two—invite guests who know each other and keep the shower moving—you won't need to fill time with stupid shower games. I don't want to play groom trivia, or lose my diaper pin if I cross my legs. At my shower, nobody was blindfolded, and everyone left with her dignity.
- **Color it consistent.** Pick two or three colors. Use them on everything shower related: invitations, paper goods, decorations and cake. For a bridal shower, try white, silver plus the color of the bridesmaids' dresses.

For a baby girl shower, go with pink and white, or light pink, dark pink and white. Because my shower was the day before Valentine's Day and for a boy, I used red hearts and pale blue accents.

- **Use the good stuff.** If the shower is small, use your good dishes and crystal. What are you saving them for? If it's a big group, go with high-quality, sturdy paper. Choose solid color paper goods over theme-printed ones. They're cheaper and look nicer.

- **Add festivity.** Skip the Mylar balloons and mixed bouquets. Get latex balloons, in one or two colors, create balloon bouquets and tie them to weights. (Don't scatter them.) Get flowers of all one color or type. Since blue flowers are rare, and red seemed heavy, I went with white roses and white tulips. The goal: less visual noise, and overall, a high-class and low-stress affair. Now pass it on to the next generation.

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