



THREE GENERATIONS ONE HAPPY FAMILY

Mish Toszeghi explains how to plan your function so that everyone, from pre-teens to grandparents, has a great time

Most bar- and batmitzvah parties are attended by three distinct age groups – the bar/batmitzvah celebrant and his/her peers, the parents and their peers and the grandparents and their peers. So how do you create an event that works for them all?

WHAT TO EAT

There is no harm in serving the kids a different menu from the adults. Your child may be a gourmet in the making but his or her mates won't be passing critical judgment on whether the beurre blanc, although excellent with the sea bass, had sufficient acidity. Mini fish 'n' chips, attractively presented in newspaper or American-style hot dogs from a cart – that kind of thing will go down a treat. Also, while your adults might be happy to sit for an hour and a half at the table, the kids will have munched their way through main course and dessert in 20 minutes. Get the kids involved in some other activity while the adults finish their meal.

WHAT TO DO

Typically a bar/batmitzvah party will involve a bit of side entertainment (mainly for the kids) before the meal, speeches during or just after the meal and a disco for the rest of the evening. Make sure everyone is engaged by what you offer and that nobody is forced to endure something they cannot abide.

Before the meal, adults will generally be happy to mingle, provided they have a drink and the occasional nibble. The children, in contrast, will need a distraction. If the kids are safely occupied, the adults will relax and enjoy that first part of the evening.

You may be able to locate the kids' activities away from the adults. If not, go for options that are not so loud that they will spoil things for other guests. A "loud" activity may not be one that is intrinsically loud but one that stirs up the volume through cheering, etc. Table football is a prime example.

Although we suggest segregating certain activities, let's not forget that one of the most moving

things about these occasions is the very fact that there are three generations present. And it is possible to capitalise on this by incorporating a communal activity. We once organised a drumming workshop that drew everyone together. It lasted just over half an hour, so was not too intrusive.

WHAT TO LISTEN TO

Another way to create magical three-generation moments is on the dance floor. The music has to be balanced, so there is something for the oldies and something for the kids... but kids do love many of the old standards – YMCA, *I Will Survive*, any Abba song. They may be dancing ironically but they will still be having a great time. There are bound to be a few guests who have already hung up their dancing shoes, so they need somewhere comfy, away from the PA, where they can see out the evening, glass in hand, within earshot of their friends. This avoids a 70-plus exodus when the disco kicks in.

When your guests get into the swing of things, they will respond to a much wider range of music than you might expect

WHERE TO SIT

Ensure that there is plenty of seating for older guests (not just the grandparents' generation – no one likes standing all evening with plate in one hand and a precarious fork-glass combination in the other). Even if you have a stand-up buffet or bowl food, some seating must be available throughout – a good distance from the PA.

WHERE TO PARK

If you have several older guests, choose a venue that is easily accessible, with parking on-site. Spare them an awkward journey and parking uncertainty.

It's not about compromise – it's about balance. Be bold, be brave – but do it wisely and the result will be something spectacular that everybody enjoys. ☺

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