



Table décor adds to the ambience and need not cost a lot

Under the Bridge, Chelsea

*Think you know what your event will cost? Think again, says **Mish Toszeghi***

We've all done it – the hastily compiled back-of-an-envelope budget. And generally we do get the main points covered. Venue, food, drink and entertainment, a photographer and a few minor extras such as decorations and invitations. Sorted. Or is it?

SET-UP AND DE-RIG

Many venues publish hire rates that cover just the event hours, with little room either side for caterers and DJs to load in and clear out. Additional hours generally come with a price tag. Having equipment delivered, say on a Thursday or Friday for a weekend event, may also incur unexpected storage charges.

LIGHTING AND AV

Surprisingly few venues have good event lighting as standard. DJs often bring lighting and visual effects but these tend to cover only the dance floor. A basic lighting package won't cost the earth but will transform the room. If hiring the venue's AV equipment, it may insist you use – and pay for – its technicians.

FURNITURE

Even if your venue has basic tables and chairs, you may need to hire unusual items such as sofas, bars and posier tables. Check delivery and storage costs.

KOSHER CATERING

Many venues charge extra for an outside caterer to use their kitchen, on top of the dry-hire fee. This can be substantial, so address it at the start.

SECURITY

Some venues insist you use their security firm. Even if yours doesn't, security is something you ought to consider, not only to keep unwanted guests out but also to keep the kids in and stop them from spreading the party into areas where they shouldn't be.

TOILETS

Drab bathrooms are off-putting. For £20 you can dress them with soaps, scent, tissues and flowers.

DAMAGES

We heard of someone receiving a shocking plumbing bill from a venue after a guest dropped a bottle into a toilet. Accidents and minor misdemeanours do happen, so check the venue's damage policy in advance. If, for example, your caterer breaks the venue's kitchen equipment, who is liable?

To rectify our initial budget, simply take a second envelope, entitle it "contingency" and add the elements above. Or call an event company and they'll sort it all for you. **7**

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THE HIDDEN COSTS OF A SIMCHAH