



# La Vie en Red

Pasadena Magazine enlisted Ngoc Nguyen Lay, the founder of Skybox Event Productions and the author of our new favorite entertaining bible, *Inspired Celebrations*, to create a red-hot Red Party inspired by our February issue's theme. Here, Ngoc reveals the process behind the look and feel of this sumptuous soiree at Magnolia Lounge, and shares insider tips and cocktail recipes to make any hostess the mostess. DO try this at home!

PHOTOGRAPHS BY // **ZEKE RUELAS**

## WELL RED

In general, when you pick a theme the first things you want to think about are your guests (who is this party for?), your location, and the time of day. Since we had chosen a cocktail party, I knew we wanted the overall feel to be sophisticated, with classy red elements. We could have brought in a lot of red candy but we knew this was going to be a more adult-like, evening party with drinks, hors d'oeuvres and desserts. Remember, just because you have a theme it doesn't mean the whole party has to follow that. I wanted the red to pop. You don't want it to look like you picked every red thing you could find.





### RED LETTER DAY

Once we had secured Magnolia Lounge as our location (which I was familiar with because I had my engagement party there!) I based the design off their damask wallpaper. You don't want to fight with a pattern like that. From there, I knew it would look really pretty if we had a hand-calligraphy invitation, which immediately lets your guests know the vibe of the party, that they should get dressed up. You always want your guests to feel as prepared as possible.

I definitely wanted to go fun with red straws and red napkins, but red plates would have been too much. Knowing that red was so easy with food and flowers I knew I wasn't doing red linens. Silver or black is a nice accent, and white is always clean and elegant. Candles add a romantic feel, and red flowers were an easy way to pull the color in. When you're throwing a party you want to think of what's feasible. With a blue party, there aren't really any blue flowers.



### RED FLAG

Your food is your signature piece. Anytime you have food that's colorful you want to plate it on white. At a cocktail party, it should be easy for people to get food and walk around with their drink. And you don't want dessert and food on the same table, because you're going to get traffic. You want drinks, desserts and food in different areas, because then you can control the flow.

Slider versions of the Haven Burger with Pickled Red Onions, Roasted Red Bell Pepper, Wild Arugula, and St. Agur Cheese by Haven Gastropub, 42 S. De Lacey Ave., Pasadena. 626.768.9555 or havengastropub.com.

Ahi Tuna Crudo with Pickled Red Onion, Blood Orange Citronette and Micro Red Radish by Trattoria Neapolis, 336 S. Lake Ave., Pasadena. 626.792.3000 or trattorianeapolis.com.



### CHERRY PICKED

Again, because our goal is for the color to pop, some of our desserts were really red but not all of them, like the white frosted cupcakes with a single red raspberry and the macarons plated on white, picking up the damask motif from the wallpaper. I really like how we didn't overfill the dessert area. You never want to put all your goods out at once, you want to put just enough that every guest can grab one and still have some leftover to refill. Bite-sized desserts like mini-cupcakes are perfect. It's really hard for a guest to want to eat a huge slice of cake on a plate. If there are little cupcakes I can have a few and not feel bad about myself. It's also finger food. Now you've saved yourself the cleanup and the waste.

Chocolate Fudge Cupcakes with Grand Marnier Frosting, Red Velvet Cupcakes, and Raspberry Macarons by The Spot Gourmet, 1936 West Glenoaks Blvd., Glendale. 818.861.7335 or thespotgourmet.com.





### RUBY SIPPERS

For this party I chose to create three cocktails, but I would base the number of drinks on guest count. Also, are you hiring someone to serve it or are you going to have it pre-made? You can put the menu on the table and let the guests go at it and make it themselves, but if you're going to mix the drinks and it's just a party of 20 I would stick with two. You want to make sure your work level is balanced. I'm such a fan of fresh fruits in drinks, and because we're in California a lot of things are in season all the time. You can tweak any of these recipes for a non-alcoholic option.



### STRAWBERRY KISS

- 1 1/2 oz. vanilla flavor vodka
- 1/2 oz. strawberry liqueur
- Splash of cranberry juice

Combine ingredients and top with champagne.

### VERY BERRY PUNCH

- 1 oz. cherry liqueur
- 1 oz. triple sec
- Splash of grenadine
- Splash of cranberry juice

Shake together all ingredients but cranberry juice with ice. Pour into glass and top with cranberry juice. Garnish with a fresh sliced lemons, blackberry, strawberry and raspberry.

### RED CRUSH

- 1 1/2 oz. vodka
- 1 oz. sour mix
- 1/2 oz. simple syrup
- 6 mint leaves
- 3 mix berries
- Club Soda
- Splash of grenadine or cranberry juice

Muddle mix berries, mint, and simple syrup in a shaker. Add ice, vodka, and sour mix. Strain into a glass. Add a splash of club soda.

### RESOURCE GUIDE

Magnolia Lounge, 492 S. Lake Ave., Pasadena. 626.584.1126 or [magnoliaonlake.com](http://magnoliaonlake.com)

Event Coordination by Ngoc Nguyen Lay, Skybox Event Productions. 626.327.2100 or [skyboxeventproductions.com](http://skyboxeventproductions.com).

Menu and Invitation Calligraphy by Katrina S. L. Centeno, Maison du Papier. 626.696.3913 or [calligraphykatrina.com](http://calligraphykatrina.com).

Flowers by Linda Young, LV Floral Events. 626.236.8730.

Balloons by Balloon Celebrations, 1605 Montana Ave., Santa Monica. 310.458.4422 or [ballooncelebrations.com](http://ballooncelebrations.com).



### SCARLET MEMORIES

It's a really nice gesture to send your guests home with a party favor, but it's a misconception to think that every guest is going to take one. If there are 30 people at the party I'd do 20 or even 15. You can display them at the exit so people can grab one as they leave.

