

Dear Party Guru: My vegan hubby's 50th birthday is coming up, and I'd like to make it special. What are some ideas for throwing a festive, upbeat party?

The Guru Responds: What better way to celebrate the big 5-0 than to pay homage to the decade in which he was born? With the right combination of food, drinks, décor, and music, your home could be transformed into a retro residence.

Canapés and Casseroles:

The 1950s saw the birth of a plethora of processed, packaged foods and an increase in the consumption of meat and dairy. (It's really a wonder anyone made it into the 1960s!) However, some plant-based foods made their way onto menus and others can be easily made veggie.

*Arrange tables and chairs like a 50s diner and serve veggie burgers, fries, club sandwiches, and potato chips.

*Create a suburban soiree and feature miniature pizzas (use English muffins), any type of casserole, French-style green beans, and veggie dogs in a blanket.

*Don your BBQ apron and head to the yard for veggie burgers and franks, potato salad, coleslaw, and anything in a "boat."

Soda Jerks and Bake-Offs:

A 50s party wouldn't be complete without root beer floats, milkshakes (non-dairy, of course), and a Bake-Off! Ask friends to bring their best baked goods and award prizes in various categories.

Rock, Rattle, and Roll:

Hook up your iPod, go cruisin' on iTunes. Rock out with Chuck Berry, Buddy Holly, and Elvis. Jazz it up with Miles, Ella, and Ray. Get down with T-Bone Walker and Muddy Waters. Keep it smooth with Frank, Billie, and Tony Bennett.

Shaken and Stirred

After surviving Prohibition, the Great Depression, and World War II, 1950s Americans definitely made up for past prudence. Favorite cocktails included the Old Fashioned, Screwdriver, Martini, Tom Collins, and Manhattan. Don't forget the suds: Schlitz and Pabst were popular beers in the 50s.

Motion Pictures and Moonlight:

What the 50s lacked in healthful food, they made up for in breathtaking cinema. Rent a projector and screen, set up a concession stand for popcorn, and host a "drive-in" in your backyard. Screen such classics as Kurosawa's *Seven Samurai*, Fellini's *Nights of Cabiria*, Bergman's *The Seventh Seal*, or Mankiewicz's *All About Eve*.

Parlor Games and Rec Room Revelry:

Have a "Name that 1950s Tune" contest, a Hula Hoop contest, or a limbo contest. Sorry, *Twister* wasn't created yet.

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