

Throw A Party For Your Pet Bird

Need advice on planning your next fiesta for your pet parrot?

By Nikki Moustaki

So you want to throw a party for your bird. No problem. It just takes a little planning. Remember that a parrot party is designed for the birds, so the party fare and theme might be a little different from your neighbor's bash.

Professional event planner Alison Minton, president of Maplemint Enterprises, Inc., in New York recently threw a "meet-and-greet" party for her parrots (an umbrella cockatoo and a white-capped Pionus) and her friends. "The food was a vegetarian buffet so the birds could eat everything," said Minton. "I assumed the guests might feed them and wanted to make sure there was nothing that could be harmful to them. There were hors d'oeuvres, like bruschetta and mini pizzas, and the entrees were two kinds of veggie pasta and a mushroom risotto. Dessert was a carrot cake with cream cheese icing decorated with 'Happy Birthday Chris & Holly.' They loved the food, especially the risotto and the carrot cake. I was holding a plate with risotto on it and both birds swooped down and grabbed my food. Chris grabbed my roll and Holly chowed down on the risotto." Rules To Party By

- 1) Brief your guests on proper parrot interactions (including unwanted interactions).
- 2) Don't allow them to feed your bird(s) food without your consent.
- 3) Allow your bird some downtime if it shows signs of stress or appears overly tired.
- 4) Know where your bird(s) is at all times and/or designate a bird watcher to keep an eye on your bird.

Sharon Blake, owner of FeatherLand Aviary in Vancouver, Washington, regularly holds "birdy baby showers" for the people who adopt her "fids." She held the first shower after flying one of her babies, Tamu, to the bird's new owner in New York. The best part about the party, Blake said, was that she got to meet a lot of people she had only known from online bird clubs. One of the other highlights was the presentation of the adoption papers. "When Mike opened the 'adoption' paper he saw that it had Tamu's foot print in dried 'birdie-poo' on it," she said.

Nichole Okum, a full-time student at Shippensburg University and an employee at Shannon's Precious Parrots in Newville, Pennsylvania, has thrown her parrots several parties, but the most memorable one was a big outdoor bash at the store where she works. The honored guests were Shilo, a military macaw, and Jed, a green-cheeked conure.

"I decided to throw them this large party because they are so perfect and they deserve it," said Okum. "I love planning events where our friends that have birds can get together and share stories about 'their babies.' Shilo loves attention from everyone, and he behaves so well around people. I felt that though people may think that throwing a birthday party for a bird is odd, they would still attend and have a great time."

One of the guests of Okum's party, Sandy Warren from Carlisle, Pennsylvania, said that the party was not what she had expected. "The human attendees were all so friendly, and I had no problem making a lot of new friends, though I don't remember many of the human names, only the birds," she said. "A tent was set up for all the food and another one for the guests and their feathered kids. There were balloons and playstands and birds everywhere."

Ray Pietras and his partner Ed Moeckel once threw a Bird-Mitzvah for their African grey, and most recently threw a Birdday Bash for their two newest greys, Fric and Frac.

"We are constantly being invited to birthday parties for our friends' children and, since we have no children of our own, we decided to do a 'birdday' party when Fric and Frac were 1 year old," said Pietras.

The party was held at Headquarters Plaza Hotel in Morristown, New Jersey, and the guest list topped 250 people from as far away as Florida and England. "To say the least, the party was over the top," said Pietras. "During the cocktail hour, the drummers from the 'Lion King' entertained so that the birds would feel at home," said Pietras. "All of the decorations were big so that it looked like the world as seen through a child's eyes. During the party we had a DJ and a doo wop band entertain. Our birds are used to a lot of company, so they just blended right in, and they loved the shrimp and cocktail franks and the Shirley Temples."

A tattoo artist also entertained guests, as well as a hat artist, who helped the guests make their own elaborate hats. Fric and Frac received so many gifts that most of the toys were donated to the Gabriel Foundation, and many guests donated directly to a charity rather than bring a gift.

Parrots At The Party

If you can safely accommodate your bird(s) outside, consider hosting the parrot party outdoors to make clean-up easier. "Provide plenty of shade and have enough play stands with easy access to fresh water and food for each bird," said Okum. "If you have balloons, make sure that they don't pop because the sound can frighten the birds." Okum also suggests keeping an eye on any children in attendance. "Some of the birds may not be used to their energy or size."

As for getting people to your parrot party, creative invitations and party favors are key, so are incentives. "Having the party benefit an animal or bird-related charity is a great idea, because most people can relate to that and see that as incentive to attend," said Minton. "Goody bags or a small party favor are a nice touch."

Outsiders might think that parrot parties are a little weird, but sometimes trendsetters have to take a few jeers before the trend catches on. When you have a parrot, it's impossible to maintain a "too cool for school" attitude. Who can do that with dried poop on your shoulder? So, it's not about being cool, it's about having fun. And there's nothing a parrot likes more than being the center of attention. Well, that is, except for opening presents.