
URBAN GOURMET'S GUIDE TO GALA DINNERS

Planning: At least 6-8 Months Ahead of Event

- Determine the size and scope of your event
- Establish your event “mission” (goals and objectives)
- Establish your “compelling reason” for people to say yes!
- Risk assessment – what are the risks with this event? How can they be minimised?
- How is success measured?
- Choose 2-3 dates
- Identify venues and pencil dates in
- Create your Event Master Plan (Look at www.studentaffairs.duke.edu/mlw/resources-references/event-planning-templates these templates are awesome!)
- If there is more than one person organising, determine who is in charge of what
- Get cost estimates (*e.g., venue hire, food & beverages, equipment, décor/styling, speaker fees, travel, etc.*) and create a budget
- Create a publicity plan & brand for your event
- Identify and confirm speakers/presenters/entertainers (confirm their travel, dietary requirements, payment and technical needs)
- Once confirmed book travel and accommodation for speakers/presenters/entertainers
- Identify and contact sponsors/partners
- Create guest list or target audience

3-6 Months Ahead of Event

- Confirm your caterer (book tasting if necessary)
- Speaker/presenter/entertainers should confirm their presentation or speech topics, provide bio info and photo
- Set up a RSVP/booking/registration/ticketing system
- Set up/enable online registration
- Check need for any special permits, licenses, insurance, etc.
- Confirm and arrange all details with venue re A/V equipment, registration set-up, parking, signage, etc.
- Review security needs/plan for the event with venue manager

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- Confirm all additional suppliers i.e. florist, event stylist, music
- Publicity: Follow your publicity plan
- Create draft runsheet (timings, event contacts, supplier timings & contacts etc)
- Create and publish publicity pieces (newsletter articles, ads, radio spots, blog posts)
- Request logos from corporate sponsors for online and printed materials
- Develop and produce invitations, programs, posters, tickets, etc.
- Develop media list & prepare News Release, Media Advisory, Backgrounder and all media kit materials (e.g., speaker info, photos, etc.)
- Create event page on your website or mobile app
- Enable/create email event notifications – save the dates
- Create a Facebook event page
- Develop a promo video and post on YouTube and your Facebook page
- Register your event on a variety of online event calendars
- Create some buzz on your blog or member forums
- Determine VIPs and create invitation & tracking document (e.g., spreadsheet)

2 months prior to event

- Send reminders to contact list re registration/participation
- Presenters/Speakers - Request copy of speeches and/or presentations
- Sponsorship: Follow up to confirm sponsorships and underwriting
- Release press announcements about keynote speakers, celebrities, VIPs attending, honourees, etc.
- Post your initial event news release on your website and circulate to all partners, affiliated organizations, etc.
- Have all organisers/suppliers meet on site to run through the event and develop any backup plans needed

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1 week ahead

- Confirm all details against your Master Plan – and ensure back-up plans are in place for any situation
- Finalize your event runsheet
- Brief any/all hosts, greeters, volunteers about their event duties and timelines
- Have the final seating plan, place cards, seating plan printed
- Provide final registration numbers to caterer along with seating plan, dietary requirements and your runsheet
- Make print and online copies of any speeches, videos, presentations, etc.
- Final registration check, name badges & registration list
- Determine photo op and interview opportunities with any presenters, VIPs etc. and confirm details with interviewee and media

1 day ahead

- Confirm media attending
- Ensure all signage is in place
- Ensure registration and media tables are prepared and stocked with necessary items (e.g., blank name badges, paper, pens, tape, stapler, etc.)
- Ensure all promo items, gifts, trophies, etc. are on-site

Event day

- Ensure you have copies of all instructions, directions, phone numbers, keys, extra parking permits for VIP guests, seating charts and guest lists with you
- Check-in with your caterer to ensure their team is on track – your caterer should coordinate with your other suppliers such as AV, styling, florists etc

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Immediately following event

Once the event is over, it's not over:

- Budget Reporting: gather all receipts, documentation, final registration data and update your budget
- Send thank-you's and acknowledgement letters to:
 - Sponsors
 - Volunteers
 - Speakers/presenters
 - Donors
 - the Media
- Post-Event Survey – get feedback on what people enjoyed about your event, and where you have room to improve.
- Follow-up Communication with Event Participants
- More thank you's – thank your guests for participating and promote your ongoing programs including how they can support you throughout the year by joining, volunteering or making a donation.
- Conduct a thorough debrief with all organisers and suppliers
- Create guidelines for improvement for the next event
- Have a rest and then start planning for next year!!