

Time for creativi-tea!

Themed dining experiences create fun and memorable occasions for residents and staff alike. Billie Moore, managing director of McCullough Moore – the creative force behind many a breath taking NACC event – shares her expertise and top tips to help you transform teatime into something very special.

Mad Hatter's Tea Party

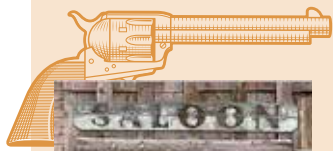


- ▶ It's all about lots of bright colours
- ▶ Use chequered tablecloths as your base and add a range of brightly coloured napkins
- ▶ Add lots of tea pots and vintage style cups and saucers
- ▶ Arrange cakes stands with beautiful cakes – get chef to have some fun! Add cheap strings of pearls and flowers to jazz up the cake stands
- ▶ Use decorations such as candy canes for the cakes
- ▶ Don't forget the jam tarts!
- ▶ Order giant card pocket watches and add to the tables
- ▶ Buy arrow signs and cardboard cutouts of Alice in Wonderland, the Mad Hatter and Cheshire Cat and place at the entrance and around the room
- ▶ Scatter playing cards face up on the tables
- ▶ Pin brightly coloured bunting along the table edges
- ▶ If your budget allows, add a chocolate fountain

BILLIE SAYS:

Follow these simple steps to give residents a teatime they won't forget:

- ▶ Choose a theme – discuss with colleagues/residents and personalise it to suit your residents
- ▶ Google your chosen theme and get lots of ideas for colours/ table layouts/props
- ▶ Adapt each theme to suit your budget too – sometimes just using bright coloured tablecloths and napkins can transform a table
- ▶ Most themed items can be bought cheaply online – e.g. Amazon, Party Delights, Partyrama, ebay, Party Packs, Fun Party Supplies
- ▶ Many props and items can be re-used time and time again
- ▶ When it comes to creating the atmosphere and making the theme come to life, remember it's all about layering!
- ▶ If budget allows, find a scene setter that matches your theme. These are normally 15m long by 2m high and can be pinned or white tacked around your dining room walls. Then decide on some theme-fitting elements and paraphernalia and place these on tables
- ▶ To tie everything together play music related to the theme – this can be so nostalgic and creates a wonderful environment
- ▶ Why not create a simple quiz with questions that again match your theme?
- ▶ Finally, discuss your themes with the catering team and plan a menu to match. And remember to have some fun with how the food is presented!



THE WILD WEST



This is a relatively easy theme. There's lots of ideas online, but here's a few to get started:

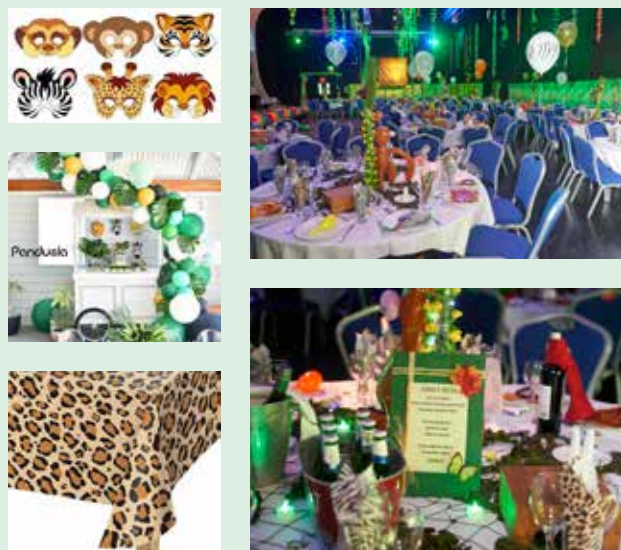
- ▶ Consider ordering a saloon/western-style scene. These are around £20 for a 15m backdrop and pinned around the room, they make a big impact
- ▶ Use chequered tablecloths as your table base
- ▶ Centre pieces: Use your imagination... how about sunflowers in old wine bottles or cactuses in tin pots?
- ▶ Order some cowboy hats from one of the party suppliers (only a few pounds each) and scatter around the room and on tables
- ▶ Sheriff badges, moustaches and neck scarves look great on the tables
- ▶ Put bowls/mini metal pales of nuts/popcorn/ tortillas on tables
- ▶ Download a Western 'Wanted' template and include pictures of residents and staff to print out and pin up
- ▶ Order 'stagecoach/jail' mini signage to put up around the room
- ▶ Staff might like to get in the spirit and wear checked shirts, jeans and neck scarves
- ▶ Play country and western music, not forgetting theme music for famous western films
- ▶ Get chef to have fun with his food offering... Tex-Mex and loaded jackets or tortillas with dips

NIGHT AT THE OSCARS



- ▶ Chic and classic, this theme is always super glam
- ▶ Start with black tablecloths and add gold napkins and sparkles
- ▶ Mini Oscars can be bought and placed on tables
- ▶ Put your gold napkins into glasses on tables
- ▶ How about ordering some clapper boards and making these the centre focal point?
- ▶ Add residents' names to walk of fame stickers – these can be ordered online
- ▶ Popcorn looks great in Hollywood popcorn boxes
- ▶ Gold and black balloons around the room will add extra glamour
- ▶ Print pictures of famous movie stars through the ages and pin up around the room
- ▶ Play Oscar-winning movies on screens or Oscar-winning film music
- ▶ Encourage staff and residents to put on their glad rags!

JUNGLE BOOK



- ▶ This is a really fun theme
- ▶ Use animal print tablecloths as your base and add palm tree plates and animal print napkins
- ▶ If you've enough budget, order some jungle animal inflatables to put around the room – from as little as £2 each
- ▶ Order artificial vines and flowers to put on chairs and hang over windows
- ▶ Green balloons and tropical leaf garlands hung around the walls add loads of jungle atmosphere
- ▶ Staff might fancy wearing animal masks (or not!)
- ▶ Work with the catering team to create a fun-themed menu

EGYPTIAN



- ▶ This theme works well when you pick your main colour themes of either gold and turquoise or gold and purple
- ▶ Order some turquoise or purple tablecloths and gold or Egyptian/pharaoh printed napkins
- ▶ Order Tutankhamun heads
- ▶ Add sugared almonds, dates and fruit in gold bowls on the table
- ▶ Decorate the tables with battery-operated pillar candles and artificial palm leaves
- ▶ Print Egyptian images such as coloured scarabs/hieroglyphics/sphinx and pin up around the walls

Medieval Feast



- ▶ Everyone loves a medieval banquet, so why not choose this theme for an afternoon tea?
- ▶ Order a medieval scene setter to put against the walls, if budget allows
- ▶ Lay your tables with a hessian, red or blue tablecloth and build from there
- ▶ Use artificial ivy and battery-operated candles in the centre of the tables
- ▶ Add gold or silver plate chargers if you have them
- ▶ Have medieval-style napkins and matching bunting along the table edges
- ▶ How about having a life-size cutout knight to meet guests as they enter the room?
- ▶ Add bowls of fruit to the tables
- ▶ Staff might want to dress up!
- ▶ Knight shields; order half a dozen and place around the room and on the end of tables