

FLORAL DESIGNS BY BOTANICALS



ILLINOIS MEETINGS & EVENTS



YEAR-ROUND RULES FOR YULE

BY CASEY COOPER

THE EVENT INDUSTRY DOES NOT experience the year like regular people. We spend January, February and March recovering from the physical and mental stress of the previous December while shoveling through the drifts of vendor bills that blizzard in. Next we spend April, May and June re-sourcing the latest props, ornaments, containers, linens, specialty drinks and menus for the hottest, trendiest venues in anticipation of the looming holiday season. We spend July and August writing proposals for clients who have the foresight to plan their seasonal shindigs well in advance. September and October are for urging the rest of the world to begin the planning process. In November, we hold our breath until all hell breaks loose: December!

Since people begin to travel or stay home with family the week before Christmas, December is compressed into three workable weeks. This only adds to the intensity. Because it's a spontaneous, dodgy month, one must be flexible. One must be deft. One must be accommodating. And one must breath through it all.

As a party planner, you need all the help you can get to make it through the holiday season. Here are a few

quick tips to help you breath better during December.

Be on guard. Don't trick yourself into believing December isn't going to hit. It is much better to prepare yourself for an onslaught, than to be caught unawares.

Book your staff in advance. Once December hits, you'll be hard pressed to find free hands in the industry.

If at all possible, gracefully navigate future clients around the month of December. Promise proposals for other events either well before or well after the month.

Send client and vendor gifts or cards in any month other than December. This not only lifts a big burden from your most hectic month, but also ensures that your token of appreciation won't get lost in the shuffle.

You know you're going to get hundreds of last minute requests so stockpile some ideas by creating a notebook of thoughts for décor, creative designs or menus. You'll be so happy when you can turn to that notebook on December 12 at 1:14 a.m. for a late-breaking idea, even if you're stripped of energy and creativity.

Create realistic expectations in your personal life for December. This realization can be the key to reducing stress for the month. ■