

# A Better Bachelorette Party

BY TORY HOEN

PART  
1

## Party This Way

*Five local, slightly off-the-beaten-path itineraries for every type of bride-to-be.*



THE SCENESTER

➔ If singing, dancing, and causing a general ruckus is the objective, start with dinner at buzzy Japanese spot **Maison O** (98 Kenmare St., nr. Centre St.; 212-274-9898), where groups can choose from three family-style izakaya menus (from \$55 per person) that include dishes like rib eye and black cod. When you're ready to get rowdy, descend to Stardust Lounge, the restaurant's karaoke den, to take over either the Park room (from \$800 for four people from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; eight-person maximum) or the Classroom (from \$1,050 for nine people from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; sixteen-person maximum). When you've had your share of Whitney ballads, join the general dance party in Stardust's main lounge area.



THE EARTH CHILD

➔ Book a class at the Greenpoint studio of **Fox Fodder Farm** (67 West St., nr. Milton St.; foxfodderfarm.com), where founder **Taylor Patterson** can school up to 30 bachelorettes in the art of flower arranging (\$150 per person) or flower-crown construction (\$75 per person). Patterson also provides Champagne and snacks (\$15 per person). Don your crowns, hop the **East River Ferry** (\$4), and head to Brooklyn Bridge Park, where a staffer from Perfect Picnic NYC can hook you up with a late-afternoon feast. The "European Picnic" (\$16 per person, plus \$20 delivery fee; perfectpicnicnyc.com) includes tote bags full of local meats, cheeses, olives, jams, and breads. For an extra \$150, they'll take care of all setup (like picnic blankets) and cleanup so you can focus on your frolicking.



THE HOMEBODY

➔ If you'd rather hang out in sweats than paint the town red, make the party come to you. Kick things off with massages from **NYC Healing Hands** (nyhealinghands.com), whose therapists (from \$140 per hour, per therapist; two-hour minimum) offer massage treatments in increments of fifteen minutes. Once you're nice and relaxed, sit back while nail artists from **Vanity Projects** (vanityprojectsnyc.com) take your nails to the next level (from \$50 per person, including equipment). While you're waiting for your hands to dry, a local chef from at-home cooking service **Kitchen Surfing** (kitchensurfing.com) can whip up a customized feast right in your kitchen (from \$20 per person), serve it, and handle all cleanup. Choose from cuisines as varied as Cambodian and Ethiopian.

A woman with intricate white body art and jewelry against a patterned background. She is wearing a multi-strand necklace with a central pendant, a matching bracelet, and a ring. Her hair is styled in an updo, and she has a soft, elegant expression.

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**THE SUN WORSHIPPER**

➔ Start the party bright and early with an outdoor class from **Goodyoga** on the terrace of the Wythe Hotel (80 Wythe Ave., nr. N. 9th St., Williamsburg; 347-574-4370; 9:30 a.m. on Sundays; \$17 per person) or with a private session on a pier in **Greenpoint's Transmitter Park** (\$100 for four people; \$25 for each additional person; goodyoga.com). Once you're feeling toned, hit the pool at Williamsburg's **King & Grove hotel** (160 N. 12th St., nr. Berry St.; 718-218-7500), where the four-hour package includes access to poolside bleachers, booze, and family-style snacks (\$1,125 for ten people; \$115 for each additional person). When you're sufficiently bronzed, head to the Upper Elm on the hotel's rooftop to swill cocktails and shimmy to live D.J.'s as the sun sets over Manhattan.



**THE SPA ENTHUSIAST**

➔ If the bride simply wants to bliss out, hightail it to the new **Elizabeth Arden Red Door** at Union Square (200 Park Ave. S., nr. 17th St.; 212-388-0222) to spend the day getting rubbed, wrapped, primed, and polished. Groups of up to twenty can opt for either à la carte services or packages like the five-hour Sitting Pretty (\$356), which includes a 50-minute facial or massage, a detoxifying seaweed wrap, a warm-cream manicure and pedicure, and a makeup application. Packages include a spa lunch of dishes like a grilled-chicken-and-mozzarella sandwich with roasted-garlic aioli. Cap it all off with a round of Champagne at nearby wine bar **Pierre Loti** (53 Irving Pl., nr. 17th St.; 212-777-5684).

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**Gone Girls**

Spare your friends the haul to Vegas with these five unexpected alternatives.

**THE STANDBY**  
Wine tasting on the North Fork.

**THE TWIST**  
**DISTILLERY-HOPPING UPSTATE.**



➔➔ The Hudson Valley is the source of a number of award-winning whiskeys, not to mention farm-fresh cuisine that will help to offset your booze intake. From Manhattan, drive two hours to the idyllic **Hillrock Estate Distillery** (408 Pooles Hill Rd., Ancram, N.Y.; 518-329-1023), where a tour (\$20 per person, by reservation only) will take you through the whiskey-making process and then to the tasting room. From there, drive 50 miles south to family-owned

Tuthilltown Spirits (14 Gristmill Ln., Gardiner, N.Y.; 845-255-1527), where you can fortify yourselves on grass-fed burgers (\$15) at the next-door restaurant, Tuthill House at the Mill (20 Gristmill Ln.; 845-255-4151), before hitting the actual distillery. During a private tour (\$15 a person for eight people), you'll learn the process of spirit-making as you move through the facility, ending up in the tasting room to sample Tuthilltown's wares. Crash at Mohonk Mountain House (from \$291 per person, including meals and activities; mohonk.com), an 1869 castle in the Shawangunk Mountains. In the summer, there's a lobster bake every Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday night.

**THE STANDBY**  
Getting wild in Vegas.

**THE TWIST**  
**GETTING WILD ON A RANCH IN MONTANA.**



➔➔ Author-chef-adventurer Georgia Pellegrini's weekend-long "**Fearless Girls Getaway**" retreats (\$1,595 per person for three days and two nights; georgiapellegrini.com) take place on her sprawling Montana ranch in the remote town of Belt, where you can partake in a mix of rugged activities (horseback riding, falconry, fly fishing, ATV driving, hiking) and gentler ones (sunset yoga, massages,

cooking classes). Elaborate dinners, prepared by Pellegrini, might include seared quail over quinoa with savory huckleberries or pork-and-wild-boar roulade with braised pork belly over apple-kraut and smoked honey. End your days with s'mores and Champagne around a campfire, and then retire to rustic log cabins that offer stunning mountain views and stone fireplaces. The price of the weekend includes all food, lodging, activities, gift bags, and transfers to and from the local airport; unlimited alcohol is an additional \$75 per person.

**THE STANDBY**  
Ohm-ing at a yoga retreat at Kripalua.

**THE TWIST**  
**UNWINDING AT A RYOKAN-STYLE INN IN THE BERKSHIRES.**



➔➔ Innkeeper Louise Palmer will see after you every need when you check into **Berkshires Shirakaba** (\$700 for two suites that sleep four, and \$50 per person after that; accommodates up to eight people; berkshires-shirakaba.com), a tiny hilltop inn located in New Ashford, Massachusetts, and designed and run in the Japanese ryokan style. That means you'll leave your shoes at the door and don a traditional yukata

(cotton kimono), which some guests opt to wear for their entire stay. The property's 21 secluded acres are yours to wander, and when you're ready to relax, the ryokan has a small indoor pool, an infrared sauna, and a sundeck. Local yoga instructors and masseuses are on call, and during the summer you can book a massage in the outdoor gazebo. Each morning, you'll be offered an elaborate made-to-order Japanese breakfast; or opt for a Western version. Most guests choose to eat the six-course Japanese dinner here as well (\$130 per person), which lasts two to four hours. The inn doesn't serve alcohol, but you can BYO anything.

**THE STANDBY**  
A fancy time in Newport, Rhode Island.

**THE TWIST**  
**AN AFFORDABLE ROMP IN PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND.**



➔➔ In contrast to nearby Boston or touristy Newport, Providence is a relatively inexpensive culinary and cultural hub whose proximity to various beaches makes it an ideal spot for Northeastern bachelorettes to convene. **The Dean**, a new boutique hotel located downtown, offers affordable bunk rooms (from \$79 for a bunk that sleeps two; thedeanhotel.com). Larger groups that want to take over the entire fifth floor can do so from \$500, which

includes four rooms that sleep up to ten. Begin your night with cocktails at the Magdalene Room, the hotel's bar, before chowing down on German fare at beer hall Faust. Come nighttime, hit the Boombox, the hotel's karaoke lounge (\$7 per person per hour). The next morning, drive to Narragansett Town Beach, just 33 miles south, stopping for sandwiches at the Picnic Basket (20 Kingstown Rd., Narragansett, R.I.; 401-782-2284), or drive the same distance southeast to pick up snacks at country store Provender Fine Foods (3883 Main Rd., Tiverton, R.I.; 401-624-8084) on your way to Little Compton's unspoiled South Shore and Goosewing beaches.

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PART  
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## When The Best Night Ever ... Isn't.

*Twenty weddings later, a bachelorette-weary guest has an epiphany.*

BY JEN DOLL

**T**HOUGH IT TOOK place over a decade ago, I can still picture the bride being carried aloft on a cheap plastic chair, blindfolded, as oiled-up men gyrated around her. I remember feeling very alone at the crowded male strip club. I also remember the shoes I wore. They were red sandals with sensible heels, and by their appearance should have been very comfortable. Instead, less than an hour into the evening, they had begun to brutalize my feet, which, by the time I got home, would be covered in tiny wounds. For a long time, I viewed bachelorette parties like I viewed those shoes. They had the appearance of comfort, the promise of a good time. But all too often, returning home from a bachelorette party, I felt covered in tiny wounds of the sort that take a surprisingly long time to heal afterward.

I've been to more than twenty weddings in my lifetime, which means I've been to nearly as many of those B-word events. Even before the strip-club experience, I'd never enjoyed the corny gag gifts, the penis pasta, the games that seemed to imply the bride's years of fun were about to be over forever, or that she'd never lived at all before meeting this husband-to-be. While I knew these things were just not true, I also feared what such illusions might portend for our friendship: Would this friend, in marrying her husband, no longer be my friend? Worse, at so many bachelorette parties it seemed everyone was trying so hard—to have The Best Time Ever, to make this Last Single Night count, to prove Something—that they barely resembled

the friends I'd loved for so many years before any engagement was announced. I understood these parties were important to my friends, though, and I wanted to support them and their relationships. So I went. And went. Until that night at the male strip club, when I'd had enough. Sorry, calling in sick.

A few months ago, though, another invite came. A good friend was getting married in another country. I wasn't sure I'd be able to attend the wedding, so I went to the bachelorette. We sat in my friend's living room and ate and drank for hours, talking about the same things we'd always talked about. Yes, there was a moment in which penis-shaped treats were served, but the giggling that emerged was anything but forced or rote. "These are deliciousness!" someone shouted. It was deliciousness. That's when I realized that the beating heart of a great bachelorette party is friendship: the connective, protective web between those present, the community of support that will continue even as individual life paths diverge. What had upset me wasn't the strip club. It was that in all the orchestrations for this grand event, we'd forgotten what we were really there to celebrate. If the wedding is about the couple, the bachelorette is about the bride and her friends, and the roles they've played in each other's lives. It's different than a typical night, yes, because one of you is about to get married, but it's special because of what always has been.

*Jen Doll's memoir Save the Date: The Occasional Mortifications of a Serial Wedding Guest is out in May via Riverhead Books.*

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## Lose the Penis Straws

*Joanne Barken, founder of party-planning service the Bach, offers classy upgrades to played-out paraphernalia.*



INSTEAD OF

a Carrie Bradshaw-circa-2002 oversized martini glass ... furnish the bride with an elegant flask for the evening (from \$24 at izola.com; engraving available).



INSTEAD OF

a chintzy tiara ... treat the bride to a classy yet festive Pinctada headband (\$32 at anthropologie.com).



INSTEAD OF

taste-questionable penis straws ... sip drinks from these playful striped alternatives (\$10 for 75 at weddingstar.com).



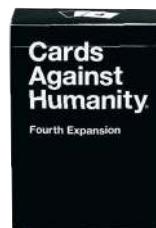
INSTEAD OF

decking the walls with campy streamers ... string up a custom piñata (from \$50 at llavesDesigns.com).



INSTEAD OF

playing the tired old "Never Have I Ever" ... get to know the bride's dark side during a rollicking round of provocative word-association game Cards Against Humanity (\$25 at cardsagainsthumanity.com).



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