

RACE DAY REQUISITES

BY KRISTEN MANIERI



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It's time again to experience what has been hailed as "the greatest two minutes in sports" along with all the trimmings that the Kentucky Derby boasts – Mint Juleps, Derby Pie and guiltless gambling.

More than 150,000 people will head to Churchill Downs on Saturday, May 3 for a party that gives Mardi Gras a run for its money, while the rest of the country watches the "Run for the Roses" from the comfort of their living room. With a little creativity and planning, you can host an event that's every bit as exciting as being in the stands.

Lisa Konecny of E-Events suggests making your event themed around all things Kentucky, starting with bouquets of red roses and goldenrod, the official state flower. Kentucky's official nickname is the Bluegrass State, which means bluegrass music is an absolute must.

If you're planning on having children at your event, consider renting ponies or having a "Turtle Derby." Schedule activities such as obstacle races.

"The Kentucky Derby is like the Super Bowl of the South," Konecny says. "You can really go all out."

For a sophisticated Southern affair, break out your best linens and serve elegant teas and sandwiches on fine china. Konecny also recommends printing the words to Kentucky's state song, "My Old Kentucky Home," on the back of your menu cards.

For a casual event, cover the tables with red-and-white checkered table cloths and decorate with bales of hay and a saddle borrowed from a local stable. Derby supplies can be purchased at kentuckyderby.com.

Serving mint juleps in their traditional silver cups is an

absolute must. More than 80,000 of these time-honored beverages are enjoyed during the Kentucky Oaks and Kentucky Derby. Follow this recipe for the perfect minty brew:

EARLY TIMES MINT JULEP

- 2 cups sugar
- 2 cups water
- sprigs of fresh mint
- crushed ice
- Early Times Kentucky Whisky
- silver Julep Cups

Make a simple syrup by boiling sugar and water together for five minutes. Cool and place in a covered container with 6 or 8 sprigs of fresh mint, then refrigerate overnight. Make one julep at a time by filling a cup with crushed ice, adding 1 Tbsp. mint syrup and 2 oz. Early Times Kentucky Whisky. Stir rapidly with a spoon to frost the outside of the cup. Garnish with a sprig of fresh mint.



According to Louisville-based event planner Sharon Bell of Memorable Celebrations, the Derby is all about color and flamboyance. Wide-brimmed hats with eccentric accents and accessories are an essential element of the event.

Of course, nothing makes this race more exciting than when you've got some money on the line. Give each guest a racing form with a list of the contenders and their standings. Guests can bet on as many horses as they choose with the money being divided between those people who chose the winning horse.

They say that everyone is a Kentuckian on Derby day, even in Orlando. So, let loose and get ready to enjoy a slice of unbridled, authentic Americana.