

# Big Girl Birthday Parties: It's All About You

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Birthdays—remember when they used to be a day we looked forward to?

Princess parties, turning sweet 16, dropping the “minor” status, the first celebration with a spouse or significant other ... yeah, those were fun.

Now, say the word, “birthday,” and most of us think about our kids: parties to plan, goodie bags to one-up the neighbors, etc. Our special day? It's become just a day you don't have to make dinner. And that's just wrong. Grab your girlfriends, let your husband watch the kids, and make a day or night of it with these ideas.



## For Shop-A-Holics:

### On The Cheap

Head up north to Pleasant Prairie and do some good old-fashioned [outlet shopping](#). North Face, Under Armour, Restoration Hardware, Coach, Le Creuset and more. Bonus? You can tell everyone you traveled out-of-state for your special day.

### Break The Bank

Gear up for a neighborhood shopping tour. Be forewarned, as boutiques go in- and out-of-business, so do local shopping tour companies. [YouJustShop.com](#) is a great place to start when planning a local excursion in some of Chicago's ritzier ZIP codes. The company offers customized tours based on your interests, such as a vintage 'VaVaVoom' tour. Tours can be chauffeured or on-foot.

## For Foodies:

### Kickin' it locally

It's your night out with your BFFs, so skip the restaurant that asks if you want fries with that. For example, [Flight in the Glen Town Center](#) is a wine bar and restaurant that offers a cozy, intimate feel and a fantastic wine selection. [Zapatista in Northbrook](#) is the latest in North Shore Mexican cuisine. You can check our dining and entertainment page for the latest in North Shore restaurants and reviews.

### Hitting the big city

[Publican](#) and [Hub 51](#) are some of the hottest places to go, but if you're looking for a little cougar action, try clubbing it at the [Drawing Room at Le Passage](#) on Rush Street or sipping uber-fancy, artisanal cocktails at [the Violet Hour](#).

## For Goofies:

Why should little kids have all the fun?

Sometimes, a restaurant or shopping just isn't what you're in the mood for—you just want to hang out. If you're feeling creative, skip the knitting circle and make a cool key chain instead! For about \$45 per person, at [She Beads](#)

in [Glenview](#), you can kick back with the girls, drink your beverage of choice and roll clay.

**Other off-the-beaten path options:**

[The Actors Gymnasium, Evanston](#)

If you're feeling physical, the company offers "big kid" birthday party packages.

[Autobahn Country Club, Joliet](#)

When you're feeling the need for speed, maybe a milestone birthday would be a good reason to shell out for a more pricey—but definitely memorable—celebration that includes high-performance driving school on a professional-level racetrack.

[The Chicago Architecture Foundation](#)

Expose yourself and your friends to a part of the city you've never seen before, with one of dozens upon dozens of tours to choose from.

**Resources:**

Choose Chicago: [www.choosechicago.com](http://www.choosechicago.com)

You Just Shop: [www.youjustshop.com](http://www.youjustshop.com)

**Books:**

The Party Girl Cookbook, Nina Lesowitz

Memorable Milestone Birthdays: Over 50 Theme Parties to Help You Celebrate by Robin A. Kring

Big Birthdays: The Party Planner Celebrates Life's Milestones by David Tutera, Charles Maring, and Jennifer Maring