

# New Year's Eve on a budget means ... sticking to budget

By **LEANNE ITALIE**  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW YORK — It's the party of the year, for those who like to party, but what happens when your New Year's Eve dreams are too big for your bank?

There are lots of ways to cut corners and still have loads of fun. You need a little imagination, possibly some elbow grease and the willingness to compromise.

Among the first things to consider is budget. Have one and stick to it, said personal finance expert Rachel Cruze. Without a bottom line, she said, it's too easy to hop from shop to shop dropping \$10 here and \$20 there. And pay with cash to stay on track.

If the goal is to go out, look for places that aren't charging extra for special New Year's packages. Some venues may be hosting a big-ticket party in one spot and opening another area on the cheap.

In Temecula, California, for instance, the Pechanga Resort & Casino offers party packages for a set price but opens its Round Bar area for no cover and free valet parking. Drinks aren't free but there's a balloon and confetti drop at midnight.

As for fancy duds, party attire can be rented and trendy pieces are plentiful at lower prices. Or throw a no-pressure pajama party at home.

The key, overall, when trying to save your New Year's Eve bucks is to forget about the Joneses, Cruze said.

"Comparing yourself, and your New Year's plans, to others not only steals your joy but also your paycheck," she said.

For families, lots of towns host inexpensive "first night" gatherings.

West of Boston in MetroWest, for example, there's an outdoor event along a local rail trail. Families sponsor and tend to bonfires along the route, supplying marshmallows, chocolate and graham crackers for s'mores.

A railway tunnel along the trail is strung with lights and local Boy Scout troops provide hot cocoa and hot dogs as people of all ages walk, some draped in strings of Christmas lights.

Brad Nierenberg, who lives near Scranton, Pennsylvania, said he helped throw a bash at his church last year, ordering inexpensive party favors online and using as centerpieces wine bottles he spray painted gold and silver to hold



APMARY ALTAFFER

Revelers celebrate as confetti flies over New York's Times Square after the clock strikes midnight during the New Year's Eve celebration in January, as seen from the Marriott Marquis hotel. New Year's Eve is the party of the year, for those who like to party, but what happens when your dreams are too big for your budget. For one, money experts say, be willing to compromise while still having fun,

similarly painted branches he collected in his backyard.

They skipped Champagne and went for ginger ale instead.

On the subject of spirits, not all less expensive Champagnes are swill. And there's always the prosecco or cava options. If you can't give up the idea of Champagne altogether and are hosting a party, do a punch instead of serving glassfuls.

Depending on your style, hosting doesn't have to cost a lot. Do "sweets and treats" rather than a full meal, go for a pot luck or get crafty with decorations you already own, said Sara Skirboll, a shopping and trends expert for the deals site RetailMeNot.

"Repurpose your Christmas tinsel and string lights," she said. "Tack up some tinsel and twinkly lights around main doorways within the party area

or gift wrap a wall for a festive photo opp."

Andrea Woroch, a consumer and money-saving expert, said don't be afraid to ask guests to BYOB. Most of your friends ask what they can bring, anyway, so why not say bring your favorite drink, whether it's beer, wine or liquor with a mixer, she said.

"If you prefer to provide the booze, as many do, don't stock a full bar," Woroch suggests. "That will become incredibly pricey, especially since you can't predict what everyone will want to drink and how much of it they will consume."

Pick a signature cocktail to serve instead, along with beer and wine. For food, make it a dessert party or go with a burger bar rather than multiple dishes or passed trays. Try doing finger foods and a cookie swap to help save money.

Looking for a destination getaway to keep the party going?

Gregg Steiner in Sherman Oaks, California, and a bunch of friends rent a house in Northern California on Airbnb every year and save a fortune. The cost for a three-night stay amounts to about \$100 per couple, he

said. They share food, liquor and other costs among 10 to 20 people.

With the drive north and other expenses, costs amount to about \$250 per couple, he said.

"It allows us all to be together in one big house instead of several expensive hotel rooms," Steiner said. "It's fun to be together."

Maria Velasquez gets together with friends and their families every year in Ringwood, New Jersey, to rent their local clubhouse or hall. Everybody brings a dessert or an appetizer. They collect \$20 or \$30 per family to cover the rental.

They had enough for a DJ once but otherwise rely on bluetooth speakers and someone's phone playlist for music.

On decorations and bubbly, the goal is to spend less than \$100, she said. The Champagne is enough for a midnight toast. They usually have 15 to 25 people, including kids of all ages.

"No one shoulders the financial burden of hosting the party in their home," Velasquez said. "Everyone pitches in to clean up at the end of the night and we all have a blast."

## Book Review: 'The Platinum Age of Television' is a must

By **JEFF AYERS**,  
ASSOCIATED PRESS

NPR's "Fresh Air" TV critic David Bianculli has been a reviewer for over 40 years, and he's crafted a wonderful overview of the history of television with "The Platinum Age of Television: From I Love Lucy to The Walking Dead, How TV Became Terrific."

Bianculli loves the medium, and it shows. Rather than taking a year-by-year approach to showcase the best of television, he breaks it down by genre, including animation,

### THE DETAILS

"The Platinum Age of Television: From I Love Lucy to The Walking Dead, How TV Became Terrific"

Penguin Random House/ Doubleday)

By David Bianculli

Westerns, spy dramas, medical shows and crime. He breaks down sitcoms into categories such as family and workplace

comedies. Each section chronicles the history while also showcasing those shows that Bianculli considers groundbreakers that have established the genre. Among the shows he considers the best for the legal category: "Perry Mason," "L.A. Law" and "Boston Lega

What makes this book so much more than an examination of the history of TV is the personal touch that Bianculli adds when he recounts why he fell in love with particular shows or how he was influenced by what he saw on the screen. He

also interviews the creators behind the shows he considers the best of the best, and getting insight from legends such as Carl Reiner, Norman Lear and Steven Bochco truly captures why television continues to be the place where quality writing and imagination can reside.

The way we watch television might be changing, and there might be so many choices that nobody can watch everything. Bianculli reassures with his examination of the history of the medium that there will always be quality

and groundbreaking storytelling. There was a golden age of television, and he believes that we are now living in the platinum age.

This book is a must for anyone who has been enthralled by the images and stories on television.

AP SUBMITTED PHOTO

This cover image released by Penguin Random House/ Doubleday shows, "The Platinum Age of Television: From I Love Lucy to The Walking Dead, How TV Became Terrific," by David Bianculli.

