

The Perfect Kid's Birthday Party – Irish vs. German

Parents are dreading them, kids demand them. And so we submit ourselves to the pressure of organising the perfect kid's birthday party. But is there really no alternative to expensive, standardised birthday parties, that people presume are expected? There is!

Coming up to our son's 8th birthday, many moms asked me what I had planned for his birthday party. "We are doing it German style", was my answer and I had them intrigued.



Standardised and Contained

Kids' birthday parties in Ireland are very different to the ones I used to celebrate as a kid in Germany. With two of our children in primary school, we get party invites almost every week. The majority of parents invites the whole class and the kids celebrate in a soft play centre. What they all have in common is a strict time limit and a contained space. Each time I notice how little the participants interact with each other,

sometimes barely noticing whose par



When the cutting of the cake is announced over the loudspeakers, the kids stream into the sterile party booth, gobbling up fast food and a themed cake, layered thick with fondant. Another round of controlled activity follows, without any room for free play or imagination. At the end there is a hefty bill for the parents and a standardised party bag for the kids, filled with yet more sugary things and plastic toys that most likely break before the kids get home. Why do parents go along with it?

Inclusiveness as a Burden

It is understandable that not every family has the space, or is willing, to organise the perfect kid's birthday party at home. We are lucky to have a [spacious garden](#) and three children with birthdays in summer. But why feel obliged to invite every single person in the class? Are our children not allowed to choose friends and surround themselves by people who are special to them? Does it already make them a bully when they don't invite everybody in the class? I don't think so.

Kid's Birthday Party German Style

The way we do our kids' birthday parties at home somewhat grew organically. We started out with my mammy friends and their children, until our kids were old enough to invite their own guests. Now they get to invite as many friends as the age they are turning which usually covers their desired guest list. I

leave it up to the parents whether they want to drop their kids off or stick around for a cuppa. Some will always stay and I have some extra hands helping out or keeping an eye on the little ones.



When the initial excitement after the arrival of the guests ceases, we have the birthday cake. Rather than waiting until the end of the party, they get to use up their sugar intake during the party games. Colourful sprinkles, fruit and decorations make up for a reduced sugar content in my

cakes.

Competition and Individuality

Kids at that age are so energetic that things can get pretty mad. And with a trampoline in the back garden, there isn't really a need for organised party games. Having all friends over at the same time is an event in itself.

But our son loves his treasure hunt in the garden. And when a good competition awaits, all party guests are on board. Who is getting the clues faster? Which team will find the treasure first? At the end everybody gets to pick small prizes and goodies out of a box. And no, there is not the same thing for every child in a prepped bag, handed out with no effort involved. Viva la Individuality!

A healthy and fun competition, as well as trusting the little ones to choose what they want, is seemingly not encouraged at kids' birthday parties these days. We teach our children about individuality and personal choice, but when it comes to simple examples of who to invite, or what reward to pick, parents make the choice for them or standardise them in a communist

manner – the same for everybody. Is that not more for their own convenience than the children's?



How to keep the Costs low

Whilst there might not be a big final bill for a kid's birthday party at home, costs can easily build up. There are a couple of things that help me keeping the costs low and still have the perfect kid's birthday party.

Plan ahead

Kids' birthdays don't creep up on us. We know exactly when they are happening and can therefore plan well in advance. I had to learn it the hard way when I ordered our son's Christmas present – which he had been asking for forever – the very last minute. Not only did I spend much more in the end, but almost got caught on a dodgy website, desperate to still get it on time. For his birthday I knew better and collected little bits and pieces over weeks. Even for the "party bags" I picked up stuff whenever I saw something in the shops. This way I gathered a variety of things that didn't cost me a fortune.

Recycle

Especially when our kids were small, we bought toys second hand a lot, or got them for free as hand-me-downs. They didn't care where they came from or that they were used. Now that they are older, they have more distinct wishes or like to buy

things themselves. However there are still ways of recycling in order to cut overall costs for the perfect kid's birthday party. Knowing how quickly they rip gifts open, I wrapped them in newspaper this year, instead of buying pricy gift wrap which they don't even notice. For the prize box I bought second hand books in condition as new – again, collecting them throughout multiple runs to the shops. Thus I got more value for money and did something for the environment too. Whatever is left will contribute to the next kid's birthday party taking place at our house.

Multipurpose



Each year I think hard how to decorate the birthday cakes. Of course it has to be a themed cake and even though mine never turn out perfect, I can't get myself to buy one. I keep the flavours simple and when it comes to decorations, I turn to non-edibles. Simply because they function as toys at the same time. Instead of buying action figures or bracelets as gifts, I put them on top of the cake or wrap them around muffins as decorations. This year I lined the icing with croc charms which doubled as party favours.

Interactive Party Games

I love preparing interactive party games for our kids' birthday parties. And it brings me joy seeing the kids getting excited about them. Hours are flying by when the bunch is active in a fun way and it doesn't take much to keep them entertained.

I have a few classics I use as icebreakers and ordinary party games which I adapt or personalise. Whilst they help to navigate through the afternoon, I want the guests to have time for free play, uncoordinated running around, and being

creative on their own terms.



A treasure hunt with clues all over the garden, or finding hidden objects, personality bingo and a movie quiz are only a few game ideas for the perfect kid's birthday party.

If you need a little creative nudge, or would like some ready-made, but individual blue prints of all-time party favourites, leave me a comment or [get in touch](#)! A party prepared with thought, love and a personal touch is what childhood memories are made of.

