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HAVING YOUR CAKE AND EATING IT TOO... WITHOUT ACTUAL CAKE

By Mia Weber

When it comes to planning a fresh and fun birthday celebration, there's no rule that you have to go the traditional cake and ice cream route. We've rounded up a few ideas to make dessert a deliciously interactive piece of the party.

Cupcake Bar: It's no secret that cupcakes' dominance as the dessert du jour shows no sign of dropping off any time soon, making them the perfect way to modernize any celebration. Let kids unleash their inner baker by setting up a cupcake bar—simply prepare cupcakes in your fave flavor and lay out a spread of multi-colored frostings, seasonal sprinkles, and even toppers like gummy animals, and fresh berries.

Make-Your-Own Caramel Apples: While caramel apples are naturally suited to the autumn season, there's no reason you can't whip up this DIY dessert for birthdays year-round. We love the idea of cooking up caramel sauce (a great activity to do with older kids and tweens) and letting guests dip their apples in an array of toppings.

Chocolate Pizza: This sugary twist on a savory classic is sweeping birthday parties across the city—and luckily for parents, it's as easy to make as it is fun to eat. Pick up some pre-made pizza dough and prepare it in the oven according to dough's instructions (usually, rolled out on parchment paper and brushed with melted butter to bake at 450 degrees Fahrenheit for 20 minutes). Then set out toppings like Nutella, peanut butter, chocolate sauce, coconut shavings, nuts, fruit, and assorted candies and let the kids top the dough to their hearts content.



For younger kiddos, try a mess-free option by heading to Union Square for a Chocolate Pizza from Max Brenner. Their deluxe version is made with melted milk and white chocolate meteors and an ice cream snow ball. Include melting campfire marshmallows as a bonus treat. **\$7.50, maxbrenner.com.**