

PITCH PERFECT

PHOTOS CHARLENE SCHREUDER
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Couturier Kobus Dippenaar is more than proficient at giving audiences the ol' razzle-dazzle at his fashion shows, but at his 50th birthday party guests were treated to a far more understated do... complete with *braaibroodjies*.





“BELIEVE it or not, I love camping – don’t hold it against me!” says Kobus Dippenaar, couturier to the stars and, as it turns out, quite the dab hand at tent construction (draped with swathes of ivory bridal fabric, no less). “When I told my friends I wanted to camp for my birthday, I got quite a few raised eyebrows, but when people found out it was going to be glamping, they were all over it!”

From the outset Kobus knew he wanted to have a destination birthday, where guests would arrive on Friday and head home – feet sore and voices happily hoarse – on Sunday. And he didn’t want anything too over the top. “I’ve always loved the sea – it’s where I work, live and play – and camping on the West Coast is something I grew up doing with my dad.

So when a friend and I went scouting for party locations, Sea Shack at Paternoster really spoke to me.”

As anyone who has ever gone away camping with friends knows, there’s always a party tent, and in the case of this particular shindig it took the form of a beautiful canopy built on the morning of the big day by Kobus and his friends, including fellow fashion designer Hendrik Vermeulen.

“Look, we’re both boerseuns at heart, so if you give us a technical challenge we’re in our element,” says Kobus. Made according to a design he had finalised at home, the canopy was fashioned from poles that he’d had sawn at his local hardware store and two bolts of power mesh that had been ordered for one of his bridal gowns – only in the wrong colour.

A quick forage yielded the pennygum and bluegum branches that Kobus ended up winding around the poles along with

fresh roses in what resembled a dramatic couture-esque headdress that would have fit right in at one of his fashion shows.

Even though Kobus is about as hands-on a party planner as they come, he was the birthday boy, so he decided to call in a little help from the professionals, who in this case happened to be some of his closest friends. Wedding and event coordinator Luke Krone was enlisted with bringing to life Kobus’s brief of timeless elegance with a splash of whimsy. The axis around which the day party turned was two long trestle tables flanked by walnut cross-back chairs, sourced from urbantonic. The table decor was a happy marriage between unaffected and opulent: vintage Delft plates, gilded cutlery and crystal stemware by Two Birds; lace-edged napery by The Tablecloth Hiring Company; and loose arrangements of banksia and dusty miller leaves by Leipzig Floral Design.



ABOVE LEFT Red feathers against classic white linen napkins from The Tablecloth Hiring Company made for simple yet impactful place settings. **ABOVE RIGHT** Vintage Delft plates were chosen to incorporate Kobus’s favourite colour combo. **OPPOSITE** The brief was classic elegance with a hint of OTT opulence.



WE LOVE



As per Kobus's stipulation, it was a banquet of braaivleis. "I kept trying to convince him to do something fancier," says friend and caterer-for-the-day Karin Koch, "but he was adamant that everything should be as if he were braaiing for friends at home. So in the end there was an abundance of meat, braai broodjies and potato salad!"

And so, in a scene straight from the last page of an Asterix comic, only infinitely more stylish, Kobus and his nearest friends and family feasted on meaty fare while sipping on fine wine and bubbly by the crateful, the peaks of the shacks and canopy creating their own magical rendition of the tiny Gallic village as the sun set over the Atlantic.

ENTERTAINING AL FRESCO THIS SUMMER

Kobus and friends weigh in with a few tips to make yours the most stylish soirée on the block.

Keep it cool: South African summers are killer, and outdoor entertaining will take it out of you – and your guests – if everyone's overheated before the canapés have arrived. Prioritise freezer space for ice above anything else, says Karin. "And remember the SPF 50 sunscreen and water!" adds Luke.

Keep searching: Whether it's an unforgettable table centrepiece or fairy lights, Kobus says it pays to shop around. "My mother has amazing style, and her

advice to me has always been, 'Don't buy the first, most expensive thing that catches your eye. Keep looking until you find something beautiful, but which still comes in on budget.'"

Keep it simple: "When it comes to a theme colour, pick one colour you like, then use it sparingly, balanced by neutrals," advises Luke.

Keep calm: Luke says it pays to have a plan B, lest an ill-timed shower or gale-force wind derail your outdoor do.

After the meal was done, the dining table made way for pouffes and daybeds.

OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Kobus and friend Brigitte Willers; dogs in attendance dug the braaivleis menu; Kobus in good spirits; toasting the next 50; socialite Edith Venter is a client and friend; Kobus's mom made decorations out of vintage doilies for the occasion; Kobus's dad taking a breather; the eye-catching canopy threw some serious shade.

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KOBUS DIPPENAAR





The pitched roofs of the glamping units at Sea Shack perfectly echoed the lines of the canopy in the image below. Can anyone say "Instagram opportunity"?



OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT Embroidery hoops and vintage lace make for easy, inexpensive DIY decor accessories. | A bit of Baroque bling never hurts. | Some textural contrast courtesy of crystal stemware and tarnished copper candlesticks from Two Birds.

