

July 6, 2007

Weekend



SUMMER COOLERS

Three Parties That Beat the Heat

By Eve Zibart and Lisa Cherkasky | Page 24

Zuraidah Hoffman of Arlington enjoys a root beer float, a staple of our soda-pop party idea. Photo by Mark Finkendaedt for The Washington Post
Tim McGraw and Faith Hill, left, by Joe. C. Hong — Associated Press



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Summer Parties

Easy as 1, 2, 3

By Eve Zibart and Lisa Cherkasky | Photos by Mark Finkenstaedt



Is Martha Stewart syndrome cramping your social life? Are you longing to throw a fabulous summer do but are stifled by those three little words “do it yourself”? More to the point: Wouldn't you just love to beat the heat?

Hey, chill! Super-hosting is just equal parts inspiration and organization. (We're too well-bred to mention the perspiration factor.) We're here to show you, step by step, how to mix up three all-ages summer coolers — a pool party, an icy adventure and a scoop-your-own root beer float and popcorn bash — and make them look easy. Easy, you might say, as Splash, Crackle and Pop.

Activities: Wet and wild! Water balloon battles, water slides, sprinkler races, etc.

Refreshment ideas: Ice pops (see directions below), watermelons, etc.

First things first: Call party rental companies for a Slip 'n Slide or water slide that attaches to standard garden hoses.

Party minus one month: Make the invitations (directions below). Check the garden hose for cracks or leaks; buy or borrow a sprinkler if you need one. Inflatable water slides require heavy-duty three-prong outdoor extension cords; purchase if necessary. Test your coolers and replace if necessary. Purchase kiddie pools (if you don't have a real one), along with water guns or blasters; balloons; beach towels (all these will double as party favors); napkins and cups, including three-ounce paper cups for pops; extra ice trays — the flat-bottomed kind — or cookie sheets that will fit in the freezer; and wooden popsicle sticks. If you plan to assemble or download a soundtrack — oldies such as the Beach

Boys and the Ventures, Doobie Brothers' “Black Water,” “Smoke on the Water,” Herbie Hancock's “Watermelon Man,” etc. — start working on that.

Two to three weeks ahead: Mail invitations.

A week ahead: Call to confirm equipment rental. Pick up fruit juices and make pops.

Four days ahead: Purchase watermelons and soft drinks.

The day before: Assemble party supplies and fill water balloons.

The day of the party: Pick up ice and rental equipment; assemble equipment. Set up kiddie pools and fill; attach sprinklers. Set up audio system. Cut up watermelon.

For the pops: Place three-ounce cups on freezer trays; fill three-fourths full with fruit juice. Freeze 30 minutes, then insert popsicle handles into center. Freeze until solid, about two hours. To unmold, run cup under warm water to loosen and peel away paper. Pops can be unmolded an hour before serving and returned to freezer on trays.

SPLASH PARTY INVITATIONS

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Aqua blue card stock and envelopes
Vellum printed with bare feet or other appropriate pattern
Half-inch-thick wired ribbon (green, blue or “watery” design)
X-Acto knife, paper cutter or scissors
Ruler
Colored pens, stickers, etc. (optional)
Hole punch

INSTRUCTIONS

- Measure envelopes. Then measure and cut the vellum sheets to twice the size of the envelopes and fold in half.
- Cut card stock slightly smaller than the envelopes so that when it's tucked inside the vellum, a thin border of vellum is visible on all sides.
- Print the party information on the cards: On one side, print “SPLASH PARTY!,” followed by “Kick off your shoes and come get wet” or “Jump in! The water's fine.” You might add “Bring your bathing suits.” On the other side, print time, date and address, etc. Decorate with stickers or drawings if desired.
- Put the cards and the vellum together in sets. Use a paper punch



- to punch two holes in the top center, about 1½ inches apart.
- Cut the ribbon into six-inch lengths. Thread a piece of ribbon through the holes on each invitation. Tie a bow and trim ribbon.

COOL AS ICE

Activities: Ice skating and après-skate refreshments.

Refreshment ideas: For adults, Icicle cocktails (see recipe at right), white wine or Prosecco and sparkling water; chèvre and water biscuits, white grapes. For kids, snow cones, white grape juice, "snowball" cupcakes, assorted white snacks.

First things first: Reserve time at the skating rink; make sure to allow for time to leave from your house if you're gathering there and returning later for refreshments. If the rink is not nearby, get and copy map and directions. Call party rental store for snow cone machine if planning to rent. (Note: Snow cone machines from rental companies are available with syrup and supplies, but they make a *lot* of servings. Smaller machines are available from big discount stores and can make four or five snow cones at a time before you have to reload ice and syrup.)

Party minus one month: Make the invitations (directions on Page 26). Check your blender and repair or replace if necessary. Purchase a

snow cone machine if desired. Buy white feather or fake fur boas (available at costume, craft or party stores) and snow globes (available at souvenir stores) as party favors. Some snow globes come with slots for inserting photographs; if you have one of those small-print instant cameras, you can take pictures at the skating rink and send the globes home already personalized. If you're inviting children and think the boas might be a safety hazard, consider angel wings or white bouncy balls. Also purchase white tablecloths, cups, spoons, napkins and straws for snow cones and plastic or glass icicles as drink decorations. (Clear or white plastic swizzle sticks will do.) Start work-

See ICE, Page 26



Icicles

8 servings

These can be part of a self-service operation at a party. Set up a station with a blender, ice in a bucket, a pitcher of cold milk, the pitcher with the chilled drink base, a few measuring cups and this recipe, printed out and slipped into a plastic sleeve.

The drink base can be prepared and refrigerated for up to 2 days in advance.

For the best presentation, serve in lowball glasses that have been well chilled in the freezer and whose rims have been dusted with sugar. Garnish with a marshmallow-topped clear plastic swizzle stick (or firm plastic icicles). From food writer and stylist Lisa Cherkasky.

INGREDIENTS

For the drink base

- 1 cup white creme de menthe
- ¼ cup peppermint schnapps
- ¾ cup vanilla-flavored vodka

For the drink

- Sparkling sugar or granulated sugar, for dusting the rims of the glasses
- 1 cup chilled low-fat milk
- 8 cups ice cubes
- 8 marshmallows, for garnish (optional)

DIRECTIONS

- For the drink base: Combine the creme de menthe, schnapps and vodka in a pitcher. Cover and refrigerate until ready to use.
- For the drink: Wet the rims of the chilled glasses and invert them one at a time onto a small plate of sparkling sugar or granulated sugar to dust the rims. Set aside.
- To make 4 Icicles at a time, combine half of the drink base, ½ cup of the milk and about 4 cups of ice cubes in a blender. Blend until smooth; pour into the sugar-rimmed lowball glasses. Garnish with a clear plastic swizzle stick that has a marshmallow on the end, if desired.

NUTRITION | Per serving: 184 calories, 1 g protein, 13 g carbohydrates, 0 g fat, 0 g saturated fat, 2 mg cholesterol, 15 mg sodium, 0 g dietary fiber. Recipe tested by Eve Zibart; e-mail questions to food@washpost.com.

ICE, From Page 25

ing on a soundtrack: Procol Har- em's "Skating on Thin Ice," Yoko Ono's "Walking on Thin Ice," Vanil- la Ice or any of the "Ice" songs by Hall & Oates, Sarah McLachlan, Stranglers, etc.

Two to three weeks ahead: Mail invitations. Purchase snow cone syrups (usually shelved with the maple syrups) or buy some at up- scale coffee shops. Buy shredded or flaked coconut, sparkling sugar, cake mix and prepared icing if us- ing to create snowball cupcakes.

One week ahead: Call rink to confirm head count; ask for group discount. If making cupcakes, bake and freeze without icing. (Un-iced white cupcakes are available at most grocery stores with a day's notice.) Shop for drink ingredients for Icicles.

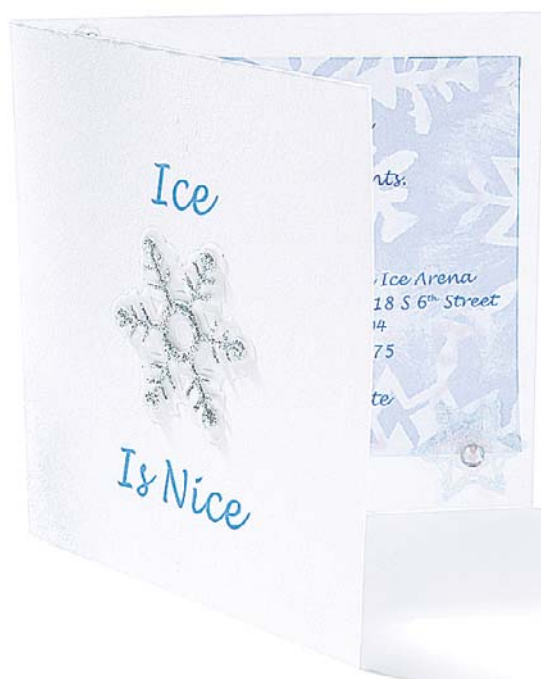
Two days before: Finish cup- cakes and store in airtight contain- er. Make drink base for Icicles and print out blender instructions. Shop for other white snacks if you intend to serve them: yogurt-cov-

ered pretzels and almonds, all- white M&Ms, Zero bars, etc.

The day before: Call to confirm rink reservation for peace of mind.

The day of the party: Buy ice and pick up snow cone machine if rent- ing. Set out machine with cups, spoons, straws and napkins. Set up frozen-drink station and post blender instructions for Icicles. Set up audio system.

For the snowball cupcakes (24): You need 2 dozen plain white cup- cakes, homemade or purchased; 3 to 4 cups shredded or flaked cocon- ut; and 1½ to 2 cups white icing, homemade or purchased. Peel any paper off cupcakes. Place coconut in medium-size mixing bowl. Ice one end and sides of cupcake; set ic- ing-side down in coconut and press into icing. Ice remaining end and roll in coconut, then roll cake be- tween palms into ball shape. Re- peat with remaining cupcakes. To serve, sprinkle sparkling sugar on glass plate or cake stand; stack snowballs on top. Place powdered sugar in sieve and gently "snow" over balls.



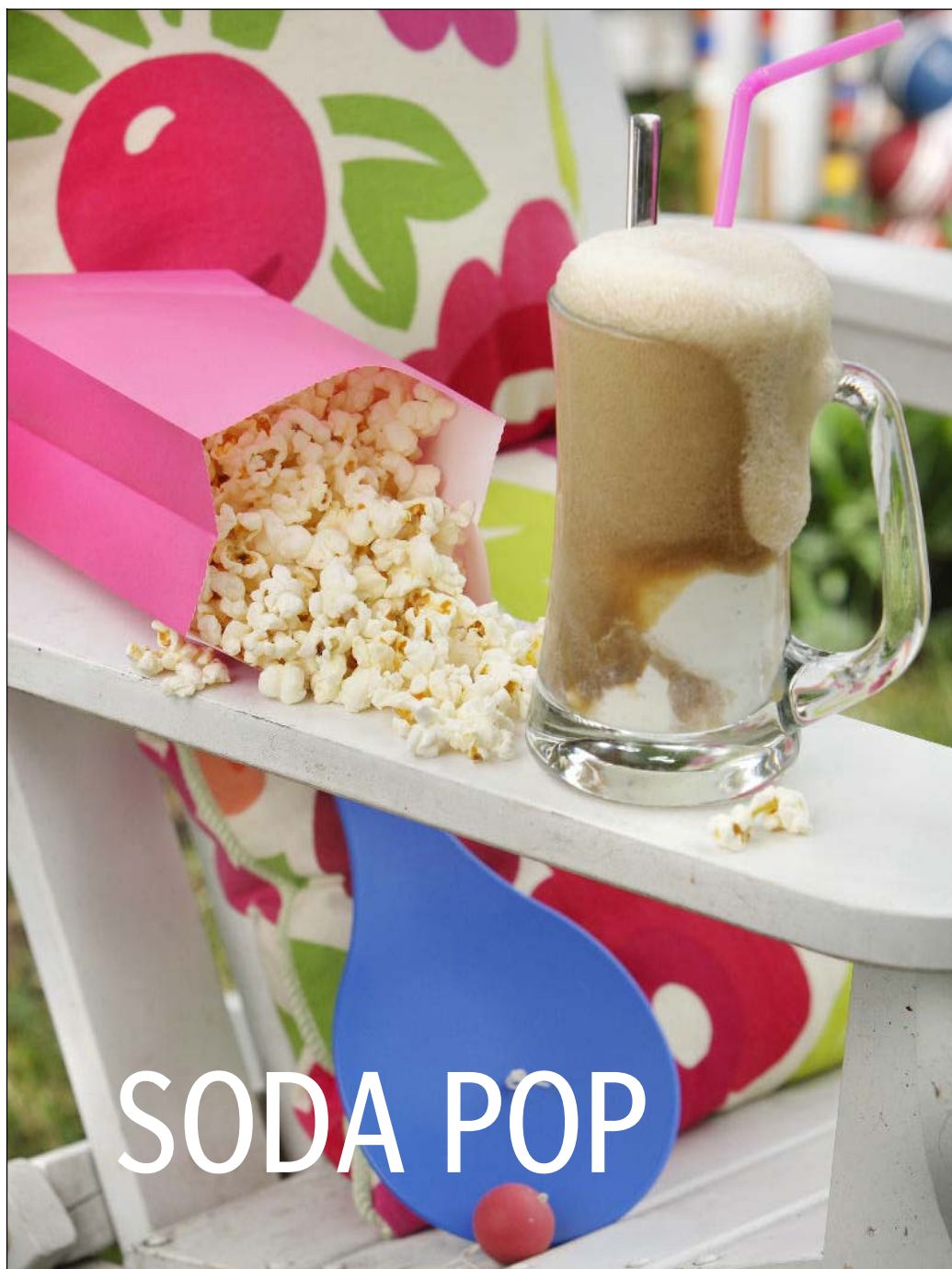
ICE IS NICE PARTY INVITATION

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Plain white cards and envelopes
Assorted snowflake stickers, one about 1½ inches in diameter and three or four smaller ones for each invitation
Decorative paper printed with snowflakes or other wintry design
X-Acto knife, paper cutter or scissors
Ruler
Paper glue (optional)
Map to rink (optional)

INSTRUCTIONS

- Measure cards; cut decorative paper into pieces a half-inch smaller on all sides.
- On the front of each card, print "Ice Is Nice," leaving a space in the middle for a large snowflake sticker.
- On the decorative paper pieces, print party information. (Ask guests to wear white.) Affix the paper to the inside of the card, using a drop of glue or just small snowflake stickers at corners. If you have snowflakes left over, stick them on the back of the cards or on the flap of the envelope.
- Enclose map with invitation.



SODA POP

Activities: Paddle ball (goes pop-pop-pop), ankle jump rope competitions, etc.

Refreshment ideas: Root beer floats, popcorn.

First things first: Call to re- serve popcorn machine if using. (For a smaller group, you can use a home machine and make several batches in advance, but the sound of the professional popper and the smell is hard to replace.) Purchase ankle jump ropes, paddle balls and prizes for games and eventual party favors. (Ankle jump ropes have ring at one end and ball at the other: You swing the ball around with one foot and hop over it with the other.) Purchase aprons for help- ers as thank-you gifts.

Party minus one month: Make invitations (see instructions on Page 27). Check your coolers, bottle openers and scoops, and repair or replace if necessary. Purchase cups (tall ones, and clear would be more fun), nap- kins (you might also consider wet wipes), straws and long- handled spoons. If you plan to pop the corn at home and put it in professional-looking bags,

buy those. Start on soundtrack: Steely Dan's "Black Cow," Billy Joel's "Root Beer Rag," Tom Waits's "Ice Cream Man," George Jones's "Root Beer" and "Popcorn" by Herb Alpert, James Brown or, of course, Hot Butter.

Two to three weeks ahead: Mail invitations.

One week ahead: Call to con- firm popcorn machine rental. Assign friends to 20-minute shifts at scoop, pour and pop- corn machine duties. Call to or- der dry ice and confirm that you can pick up at convenient time; some places have limited week- end hours. (Two 10-pound bags will keep up to two two- gallon tubs of ice cream solid in coolers for four hours; blocks are about \$16.)

Two to three days ahead: Pur- chase root beer, vanilla and choc- olate ice cream and chocolate syrup. (One gallon of ice cream and one gallon of root beer, or 16 eight-ounce bottles, will make 16 generous-size floats.) If you're making the popcorn at home, buy popcorn and airtight plastic bags for storage.

The day before: Chill root beer. Make popcorn. Set up table for float assembly line in the shade or under cover.

The day of the party: Pick up dry ice and regular ice; put ice cream in dry ice and root beer in regular ice. (Note: Always wear leather gloves when handling dry ice; use hammer or ice pick to break up.) Pick up popcorn machine and supplies; set up ma- chine. Set out paddle balls and ankle jump ropes. Set out paper goods. Lay out float makings: ice cream, scoops (in tub or ice bucket of water) and cups at one station; then the root beer; and chocolate syrup, straws and spoons last. (Guests man the first two stations, and the last is DIY.) Set up audio system.

For the floats: Scoop a cup of ice cream into the glass (about the size of a regular baseball); then top with about eight ounce- s of root beer, which will foam up into extra-big bubbles. Vanil- la ice cream in root beer is a float, chocolate ice cream in root beer is called a Brown Cow and a vanilla ice cream float with choc- olate syrup is a Black Cow.



SODA POP PARTY INVITATION

SUPPLIES AND EQUIPMENT

Card stock, in equal amounts of root-beer brown and cream colors, and envelopes
Soda straws (or hollow stirrers)
Paper punch
Daisy or other decorative stickers
Ruler
X-Acto knife, paper cutter or scissors

INSTRUCTIONS

- Measure envelopes; cut brown and cream cards slightly smaller. (Straws will make envelope bulge.)
- On the cream paper, write or print "Soda POP Party." Decorate with stickers if desired.
- On the brown paper, print "The Scoop," followed by the date of the party and address; and then print "The Pour" with party description, such as:

*"Come for root beer floats in the back yard.
The popcorn will be poppin', the paddle balls will be
boppin'.
Ankle jump-roping ain't so hard!"*

- Put the cream and brown paper pieces together in sets and align them. Use a paper punch to punch a hole near the top left corner and a hole near the bottom left corner.
- Cut the straws the same length as the paper. If the straws are thin enough to fit in the holes, thread them through to "bind" the invitations. If the straws are too thick, slit them lengthwise and roll them into a tighter tube; then thread.

The ABCs of Throwing a Party

Here are a few general party guidelines: You should set the date for your own purposes several weeks ahead so you can reserve facilities and rental equipment. (Be sure to find out the company's rain date policy and whether your deposit will be returned in case of postponement.) Also, rental companies charge to deliver: Popcorn machines are small enough to fit into a car, of course, but if you want to save money or are trying to fit a water slide into a Mini, consider enlisting a friend with an SUV or truck.

You should plan to make the invitations about a month in advance and mail them a week later; two to three weeks is the polite time frame for invitations, especially if you're considering having your party around a holiday or in high vacation time. You need to give your friends plenty of time to arrange their schedules. (And knowing how haphazard Americans can be about RSVP-ing, you may want to follow up if you haven't heard back in 10 days.) Also consider whether you wish to put an end time to the party — which tends to be rather loosely observed in any case — or whether you're willing to let it linger to its natural close.

It's a good idea to line up a couple of dependable friends to help with serving or scooping, making the ice run or, in the case of the ice-skating party, possible carpooling. (If you have a swimming pool, you may want to assign someone to keep an eye on the kids.)

Most of the items, gifts and ingredients mentioned in this story are widely available from the big discount stores, craft and hobby shops, year-round Christmas stores, party stores, gourmet food or cake-decorating shops, as well as online if you're a come-to-me type. (For more guidance, see the list of equipment rental companies and skating rinks at right.)

And remember, these are just suggestions: Feel free to improvise. Got a string of mermaid mini-lights? Plastic palm tree stirrers? Pink flamingos? Bring 'em on! Prefer silver jimmies to coconut flakes? Suit yourself. Tinsel icicles, spray-on snow? Good time to clean out the attic. And start cruising party supply shops, department stores, souvenir vendors, summer sales racks and even garage sales or online auctions, if that's your bag, for paper goods and decorations that catch your eye; you might find some fun stuff cheap. You'd be surprised how many water toys and flip-flops are already piling up on the discount tables.

Staff writer Eve Zibart is a party veteran. Arlington-based food stylist Lisa Cherkasky's work appears frequently in The Washington Post.

Where to Go for Wares

Equipment Rental Companies

Here are some area supplies of water sports and party equipment. Prices are for self-pickup and return except where noted. Delivery charges may vary depending on distance.

AMUSEMENTS UNLIMITED 12354 Wilkins Ave., Rockville. 302-881-8520. www.amusementunlimited.com. Popcorn cart \$175 per day, supplies \$65 (makes 250 2½-cup servings). Snow cone machines \$60 per day, supplies \$66 (makes 300 six-cup servings). Slip 'n Slide (24 by 8 feet) \$600 for four hours including delivery (required) and attendant.

BACKYARD INFLATABLES Clarksburg. 301-972-0939 or 301-370-6521. www.backyardinflatables.com. All prices include delivery and setup. Popcorn machines and snow cone machines \$89 each including supplies (60 servings). Rainbow Slip 'n Slide (30 by 8 by 8 feet) \$299 for four hours, \$429 for eight hours. Tropical Slip 'n Slide with pool (30 by 8 by 8 feet) \$389 for four hours, \$489 for eight hours. Rainbow Waterslide with pool (30 by 10 by 14 feet) is \$429 for four hours, \$539 for eight hours. Tropical Waterslide with pool (39 by 9 by 16 feet) is \$499 for four hours or \$599 for eight hours.

BERNIE AMUSEMENTS Fairfax. 703-980-9509. www.bernieamusementrentals.com. Snow cone machines \$40 per day, supplies \$30 (makes 200 servings). Popcorn machines \$40 per day, supplies \$25 (100 servings). Water slides (22 by 17 feet) \$200 per day; \$325 delivered.

TALK OF THE TOWN VARIETY ENTERTAINMENT 14650 Southlawn Lane, Suite 23, Rockville. 301-738-9500. (Note: No personal pickup or return on Saturdays; returns only on Sundays. Saturday delivery \$75 each way with \$1,000 rental minimum; Sunday delivery \$75 each way with \$500 minimum.) Popcorn machine \$60 per day, cart additional \$75, supplies \$35 (makes 100 servings). Snow cone machine \$60 per day, supplies \$35 (makes 100 servings). Waterslide (32 by 9 by 4 feet) \$300 per day, \$450 delivered. Slip 'n Slides (34 by 8 feet) \$275 per day.

Skating Rinks

CABIN JOHN ICE RINK 10610 Westlake Dr., Rockville. 301-365-2246. Discounts for groups of 10 or more Monday-Thursday.

FAIRFAX ICE ARENA 3779 Pickett Rd., Fairfax. 703-323-1132. www.fairfaxicearena.com. Discounts for groups of seven or more.

FORT DUPONT ICE ARENA 3779 Ely Pl. SE; 202-584-5007. www.fdia.org. Discount for groups of 35 or more.

THE GARDENS ICE HOUSE 13800 Old Gunpowder Rd., Laurel. 301-953-0100. www.thegardensicehouse.com. Discounts for groups of 10 or more.

KETTLER CAPITALS ICEPLEX 627 N. Glebe Rd. (eighth floor), Arlington. 703-243-8855. www.capitalsicecenter.com. Discounts for groups of 10 or more.

MOUNT VERNON REC CENTER 2017 Belle View Blvd., Alexandria. 703-768-3224. www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/rec/mvrec.htm. Discounts for groups of 12 or more.

ROCKVILLE ICE ARENA 50 Southlawn Ct., Rockville. 301-385-2410. www.rockvilleicearena.com. Discount for groups of 25 or more.

SKATE QUEST 1800 Michael Faraday Ct., Reston. 703-709-1010. www.usarinks.com/reston. Discount for groups of 10 or more.

SKATE QUEST 5180 Dale Blvd., Woodbridge. 703-730-8423. www.usarinks.com. Discount for groups of 10 or more.

TUCKER ROAD ICE RINK 1770 Tucker Rd., Fort Washington. 301-265-1525. www.pgiparks.com/places/sportsfac/icerinks.html. Discount for groups of 10 or more.

WHEATON ICE ARENA 11717 Orebaugh Ave., Silver Spring. 301-649-3640. www.wheatonicearena.com. Discount for groups of 10 or more.

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