



## Danielle Venokur

Through her company dvGreen, Danielle helps people plan sustainable parties. She does everything from small weddings to large conferences, always ensuring every step of the event planning is carried out in the most environmentally conscious way.

I first had the pleasure of working with her at the inaugural Greener Gadgets conference in New York City, and was impressed by how she balanced her sweet, kind nature with the intense, demanding personality an event planner must possess. She put me on garbage duty during one of the lunch breaks, which entailed standing by the disposal bins to make sure people put the compostables in the compost, the recyclables in the recycling, and so on. I was not very happy about that job, but it shows you how serious Venokur is about her job.



**Can you tell me about your background and how you got started in the event planning business?**

It's weird how sometimes when you're making a life changing decision you have no idea that that's what's going on. But other times, as in "I do", you absolutely know. So, with me and party planning, it was more the former. I had left a job doing some production work at an internet company and just got the idea in my head that I wanted to be a florist. Not really sure why or where that came from, but that was it. So I did what any good American who wants to be a florist does and I got a job at 1-800-FLOWERS. I'm not going to lie, that job was FUN. And I learned a lot. Not so much about aesthetics or sustainability, but about the nuts and bolts, like flower names, how to clean flowers, etc. After doing my time there and, well, getting fired, I lucked into a part time job answering phones at one of NYC's most respected floral and event design studios, L'Olivier Floral Atelier. I worked my way up and became Event Director and General Manager. It was at L'Olivier that I really learned about high-end event design and how exciting and challenging this business can be. It was also during this time that I realized how insanely wasteful the entire industry is, from the pesticide-ridden flowers and the virgin glass vases to all the natural waste that never finds its way to a compost heap. It was my love of event design coupled with my desire to create events that I could feel good about that led me to launch dvGreen.

**So was that sort of your "green epiphany," or have you always been an environmentalist?**

I have not always been an environmentalist. I've always loved the outdoors and have been utterly confused by the concept of throwing something "away," but it wasn't until the last six years or so that I really started to investigate what's going on and introduce sustainability into my life. I guess I just sort of grew up finally and realized that I needed to take responsibility for all of my actions — not just how I spoke to my mother, but also how the food I purchase is grown, how much garbage I produce, what I do with that waste, and on and on...



**It's really insane to think about the waste we create. Just the amount of excess food that is thrown away after events are over is staggering. How do you deal with that?**

Well, catering alone provides us with lots of different ways to make any event more sustainable. From working with caterers who choose local and organic purveyors to ensuring that all garbage is disposed of properly, which includes composting of food waste and recycling of all appropriate containers, and so on. And, yes, if there is leftover food, we always do our best to donate it. Our go-to drop off spot in Manhattan is Bowery Mission. They do incredible work and

are able to accept donations into the wee hours of the night (which is often when we wrap up parties). It is true, though, that in some venues we are not allowed to remove the extra food due to various on-site rules, so in those instances we make sure the staff is well-fed and the food does not end up in the garbage.

**So, what are the most challenging aspects of what you do?**

As an event designer you always have that pressure to think of the new, cool, next best thing as far as tabletop and room design. For me, I've gotta do that but that next best thing also needs to be sustainable. Whenever you're pulling from a smaller pool of resources, things are going to be more challenging. But, that said, often you end up with something a bit wackier and more fulfilling in the end.

**Just what life should be, right? Wacky and fulfilling. What about rewards, why do you love your job?**

I love my job because I love bringing people together, I love making things look pretty and I love leaving little behind. Because dvGreen focuses solely on sustainable event design, I have this amazing self-selecting clientele of people who are already interested in sustainability. Whether it's because it's in fashion or their passion, either way it means that I get to work with the best green vendors and create a beautiful event that we can all be proud of. And, in the process, we are able to show all of the guests how chic and subtle green can be. It's all quite fun, really.

**Yeah, I totally think the whole "green for show" thing is over. At least I hope so, those corporate giveaways like eco-pens that are half plastic just need go away. So, where do you gather inspiration?**

Wow, that's hard to answer. Many random things inspire me. A piece of ribbon from a gift wrap, a vintage Valentine's card, an old red pick-up truck, whatever. Spaces also inspire me. Anytime I walk into a new space — a bar, a restaurant, a clothing store, a great apartment, a gym — I can't seem to leave without inquiring about hosting an event there.



### **What motivates you?**

Thankfully, lots of different things. I rarely find myself without a force from some direction trying to push me forward. Obviously my desire to show people that they can be surrounded by beauty without negatively impacting our world is a big motivator. I love seeing clients happy and guests surprised and excited by the events we create. Also, I'm always happier when I'm busy, so that keeps me moving and shaking. And, of course, there's the fact that I live in NYC so without some money coming in life becomes quite a challenge.

### **What is your dream assignment?**

C'mon, really? If the clients are cool, I'm happy. Seriously, that makes all the difference in the world.

**True, it does. People underestimate the importance of just being nice.**

### **What does the Good Life mean to you?**

Family, friends, a body of swimmable water and some great food and drink all displayed beautifully on a blanket.

