

**Exclusive: Our Annual Rental Industry Forecast for 2020**  
**The Special Event + Catersource = A Super Show in Vegas**

# SPECIAL EVENTS®

**SPRING 2020**

## *Gala* **AWARD NOMINEES**

**Your preview of stunning  
events from around the world**

**HELLO, DALI:  
A SURREAL  
SOIREE FROM  
MARC FRIEDLAND  
P. 7**

**GET HIP  
TO HEALTHY  
COCKTAILS P. 28**

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Contributing editor and avowed foodie **Susan Cuadrado** on the “good libations” trend—healthy cocktails.



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# SPECIAL EVENTS

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## EDITOR'S PAGE

## LOOK SMART

**If you want** to know where the event industry is heading, then ask the rental pros. The rental insiders know who's got the big jobs, who is paying their bills, and who is not.

We turn to these industry experts for our annual event rental forecast, which starts on page 9 in this issue.

Our survey should give you some cheer about business in the year ahead. Of our rental pros responding, 89 percent predict they will handle the same number or more events in 2020 than they did in 2019.

Just over half of respondents predict that their revenue from serving business/corporate events will be better in 2020 than it was in 2019. Thirty-four percent expect this revenue stream to remain the same, while 4 percent foresee a dip in revenue from business/corporate events.

On the social/private event side, 44 percent of respondents predict that revenue will rise in 2020 over 2019 levels. Forty-three percent expect this segment to stay the same, while 8 percent expect 2020 revenue to come in below 2019 levels.

The wild card for 2020 will be the impact that politics has on the event landscape. Stay tuned as *Special Events* continues to track this topic.

This issue brings you more smart insights into the event scene today.

Our "Food for Fêtes" article, starting on page 28, shares the "heathy cocktail" trend. I already knew that I liked gin, but now I know it's good for my health!

Our "Divine Decor" feature gives you the inside track on the decor trends that top rental companies foresee. The minimalist look of the last few years is out, with rich colors and exciting textures coming to the fore. Turn to page 31 to learn more.

And of course, you will meet the smartest people in special events when you come to The Special Event 2020, March 9-12 in Las Vegas. As I'm sure you know by now, The Special Event will be co-locating with catering powerhouse Catersource this year. The payoff for you and your colleagues will be a robust exhibition floor with an eye-popping array of products and services, along with our highly regarded education sessions and showcasing events.

The cherry on top will be the final-night awards ceremony. Okay, I'm not impartial—I coordinate the *Special Events* Gala Awards, and I could not be more proud of this year's nominees. Turn to page 15 to review these remarkable events.

The smart money is betting on our show.

*Lisa Henley*

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# CONFETTI



**Surreal soiree:** The team from Marc Friedland turns L.A.'s stately California Club into a surreal setting for a 60th birthday party (here, clockwise). Photos by Yvette Roman Photography.



## Hello, Dali!

**Marc Friedland and team create a surreal soiree for a 60th birthday party.**

**Sometimes, the perfect client** meets the perfect theme meets the perfect planner. The stars aligned for this 60th birthday party for 160 guests—an outrageous theme that brought the surreal world of artist Salvador Dali alive for an unforgettable event.

The venue was downtown L.A.'s venerable California Club, a tradition since 1887. Playing off

the dignified atmosphere, the event team put surprising spins on the event right from the start.

Lead Marc Friedland of Los Angeles-based Marc Friedland Couture Communications took the initial event inspiration and ran with it. Here, the creative process began with a cigar. “My client was throwing a party for her husband and at first was con-

sidering a Havana theme party,” Friedland recalls. “But theme parties like that are a little passé now, and I knew we could do better in creating a memorable, immersive experience.”

Friedland and his client began to map out the details some nine months from the event. “We talked about cigars, of course, but then she said something that really





**Mind-bending design:** Arresting elements from the dinner ranged from giant 'lips' to eccentric greeters to Fornasetti place settings (clockwise from top left). Photos by Yvette Roman Photography.



struck me," he says. "She mentioned how he had said that turning 60 was 'surreal.'"

That was all it took for the theme to take flight. "I showed her a book I have on recipes that Dali illustrated for his wife—'Les Dinners de Gala,'" Friedland says. "The light bulb went off and she said, 'That's it!'"

The event was rich in Dali details. For example, invitations were hand-painted portraits of the guest of honor, along with an iconic Dali "melted" clock.

Under the guidance of Friedland, the event unfolded in three "acts."

Act 1 was the guests' arrival, where they were greeted by women in tuxedos wearing makeup that grew progressively more askew. A corridor of gold mirrors included white-gloved hands reaching out to offer glasses of champagne.

Act 2—dinner—sat guests at an 80-foot long table, with settings featuring Fornasetti plates. Servers were dressed in different costumes for each course, from lobster headpieces with coveralls to bowler hats with lab coats. Entertainment for each

course ranged from farm scenes playing on 30-foot LED screens to 20 chorines dancing to "Rock Lobster."

For Act 3, guests were led upstairs for dessert. Here, a club atmosphere reigned, with a magician, a photo booth, and a dance party featuring an LED dance floor.

The event's executive producer—Matthew David Hopkins, head of 360 Design Events in New York—praises this unique event. "There are these great moments in my job when everything comes together, and there is this amazing energy in the room," he says. "This event had great energy, and you could just feel the excitement—like it was weather."

Friedland has his own take on the event: "The way I look back at this event now was really a combination of David Lynch meets Baz Luhrmann, meets Dali, meets Marc!" ●

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# RENTAL FORECAST 2020

**Politics and pricing will play big roles in the outlook for event rental this year. By Lisa Hurley**

**The big forces** in special events are decor, food and entertainment. But in 2020, another factor comes into play—politics.

In the United States, the presidential election coming in November means a nice boost in business for rental companies. Regardless of party, “An election year usually brings campaign-related work—staging, rallies and so forth,” says Stuart D. Kohn, owner of Edison, N.J.-based Miller’s Rentals. “Hopefully this will help us get product out.”

While the U.S. political process should bring fuel event business, the issue is very different across the pond. Thanks to the “Brexit” vote, the United Kingdom has exited the European Union—and the way this huge shift will affect business is not yet clear.

## AWFUL UNCERTAINTY

Brexit “continues to throw uncertainty into the market,” notes Jon Noonan, group sales director for London-based Thorns Group. “Some clients are seeing negative

impacts on registrations and on sales while others are seeing the opposite, so it is challenging to understand what is going to happen once we leave the EU.”

Although the way politics will play out is still fuzzy, one issue is crystal clear for rental operators in 2020: the hurdle of rising costs. Indeed, the challenge of “increasing costs in the face of pressure to hold down prices” ticked up this year after three flat years (see page 10).

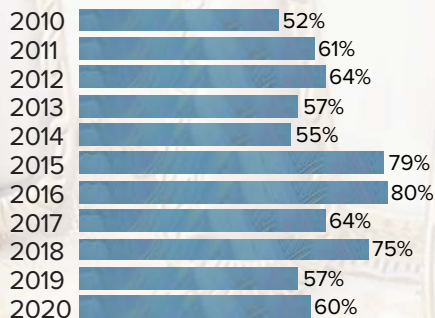
The Thorns team is facing a double threat. “An increase in the

## NEW YEAR, NEW BUSINESS

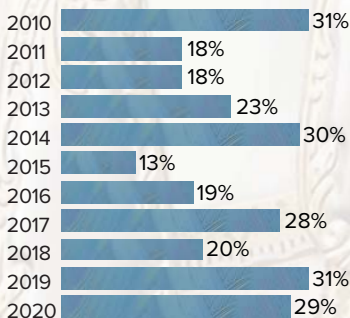
**How will the number of special events you handle this year compare with last year?**

*Responses for each new year, 2010-2020*

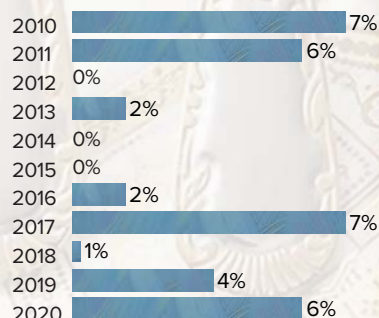
### “WE WILL HANDLE MORE EVENTS THIS YEAR”



### “WE WILL HANDLE ABOUT THE SAME NUMBER”



### “WE WILL HANDLE FEWER EVENTS THIS YEAR”



UNSURE 4%



# RENTAL FORECAST 2020

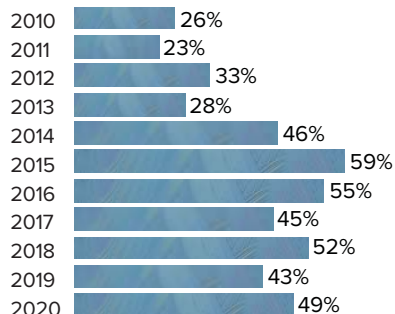
## PARTY CRASHERS

**What are the greatest challenges facing your rental operation this year?**

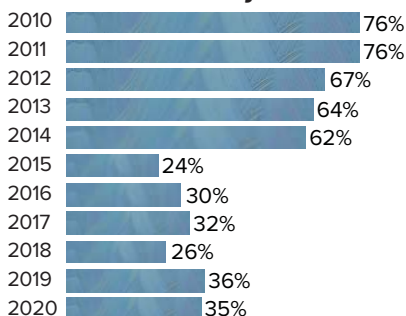
*Percentage responding; figures have been rounded off.*

*(Totals may exceed 100% because multiple answers are possible.)*

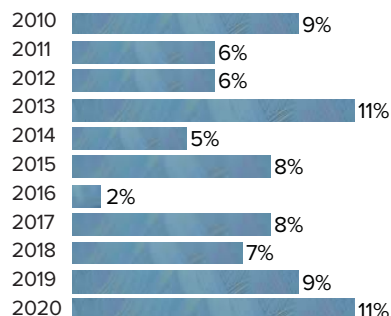
### Labor shortage/ lack of skilled labor



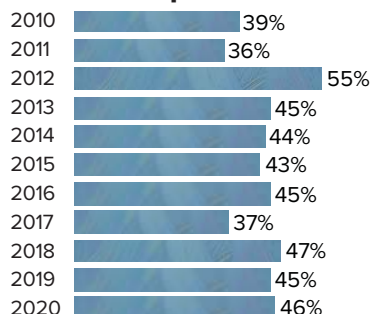
### An uncertain economy



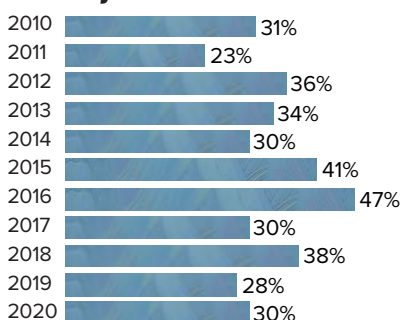
### Consolidation of client base



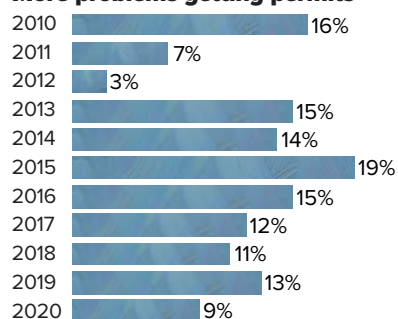
### Increased competition



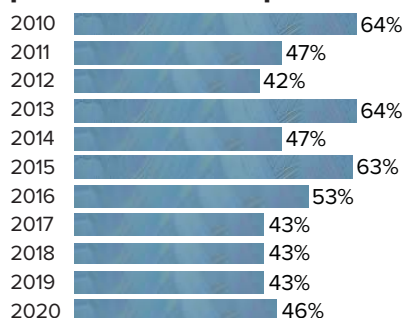
### Constantly offering new inventory



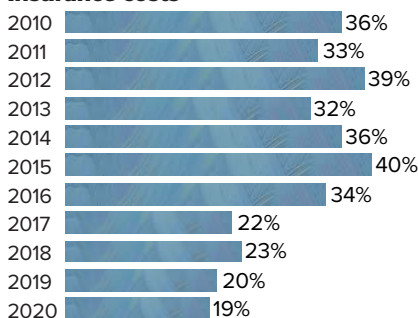
### More problems getting permits



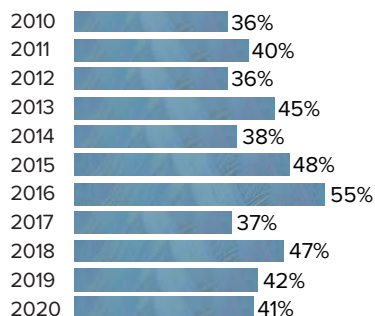
### Increasing costs in the face of pressure to hold down prices



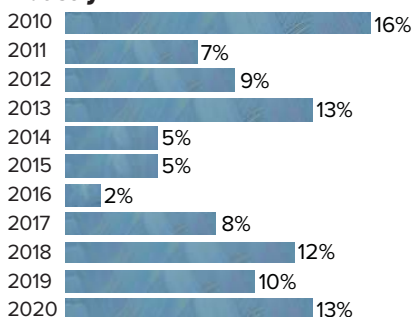
### Insurance costs



### Shorter lead times



### Consolidation of event rental industry



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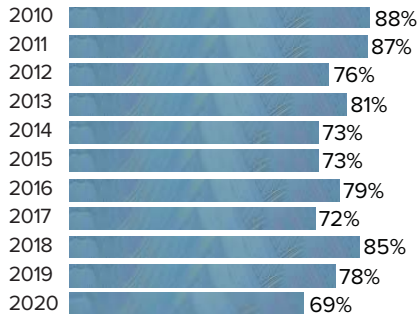
# RENTAL FORECAST 2020

## SALES-BUILDING STRATEGIES

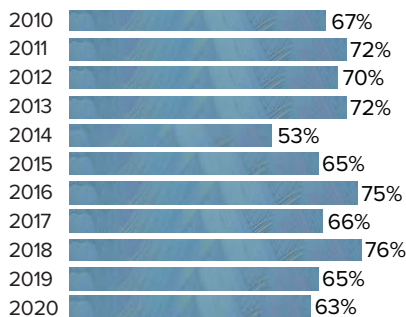
### What steps are you taking to adapt to the event rental marketplace this year?

Percentage responding; figures have been rounded off.  
(Totals may exceed 100% because multiple answers are possible.)

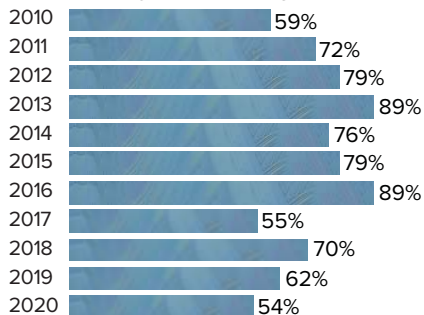
#### We are pursuing new clients



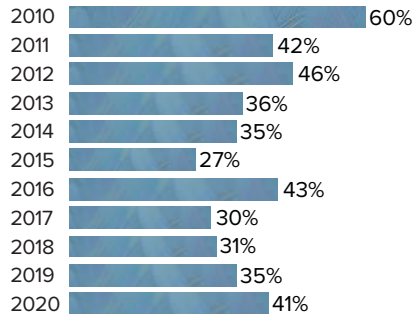
#### We are increasing marketing efforts



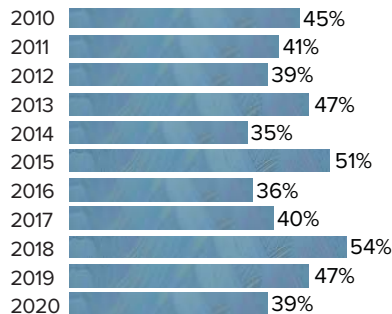
#### We are adding new inventory



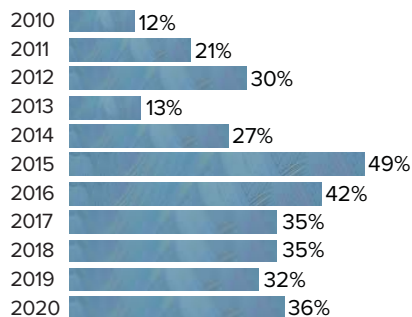
#### We are streamlining operations (e.g., reducing staff hours, etc.)



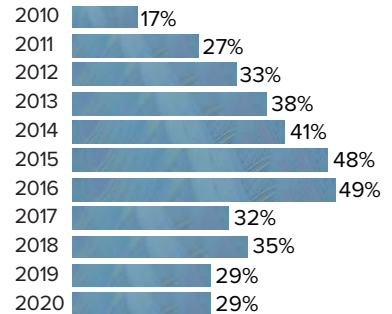
#### We are adding new services



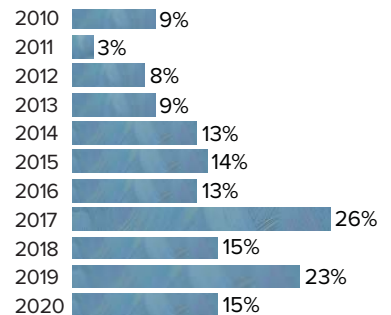
#### We are raising prices



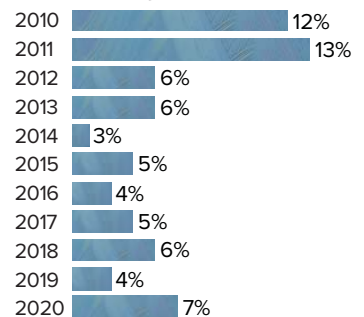
#### We are adding additional staff



#### We are adding new locations



#### We are cutting prices



national minimum wage will see an increase in the operational fixed costs of the business," Noonan notes, "and the potential for an increase in fuel prices due to the uncertainty in the Middle East may negatively impact the price of a barrel of oil."

Although many factors are at play in raising costs for event rental, most operators agree that labor is their No. 1 headache.

The shortage of affordable labor triggers a cascade of problems.

#### WHERE ARE WORKERS?

"Labor continues to be our biggest challenge in 2020; the low unemployment numbers make it difficult to find qualified, industrious people to fill out our team," says Daniel W. Hooks, president and CEO of Charlotte, N.C.-

based Party Reflections. "This is hindering our growth."

Making matters worse, "Another big challenge is raising our prices enough to allow us to compete better in the new labor market," Hooks notes. "Rental prices have lagged behind all other industries for years, making it difficult for us to attract quality labor."

But the event rental industry





# RENTAL FORECAST 2020

## SHOW US THE MONEY

How do you see revenue performing in 2020 versus 2019?



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is nothing if not resourceful, and rental operators are addressing their 2020 challenges head-on.

The team at Party Reflections has addressed the problem of rising labor costs by identifying this factor clearly to clients.

“Given the labor intensity of our industry, we decided to apply a labor charge to any piece of equipment that involved installation and removal,” Hooks explains. “For years, the rental industry has tried to include labor in the price of the items rented, but labor rates and personnel expenses have increased much faster than our prices could be raised. We needed to find a way to cover these expenses and address them specifically, like the AV companies have done for years.”

## INVIGORATING INVENTORY

Event rental is all about inventory, and the team at Boynton Beach, Fla.-based Atlas Event Rental takes a strategic approach to offering the latest and greatest.

“We always grow smart—we want to be fiscally responsible,” says Heather Rouffe, Atlas Event Rental’s director of sales and partner. “We need to have enough inventory to meet client demand while also managing budget properly to remain profitable. We plan for economic downturns just in case so that we always have funds readily available, rather than worry about losses.”

Although the strong U.S. economy has made labor hard to come by, it has largely been a boon to business.

“With a strong economy and a wide range of unique products out there, it’s a great opportunity to bring in inventory that our client base will get excited about for their events,” Rouffe says. “Having opened another new showroom, we are looking forward to bringing Atlas to another market, further expanding our reach and ability to work with clients to create memorable events.”

Even the pain of Brexit brings its

own upside. The Brexit headaches have beaten down the pound. “We have a diverse customer base and are receiving an increasing amount of international enquiries, which is probably companies capitalizing on the weak pound,” Noonan says. “This coupled with our diverse customer base should see some strong growth as a business in 2020.”

Noonan adds, “The rise of American tech companies flocking to the U.K. for their conferences and exhibitions will see some significant growth for Thorns in 2020 and beyond.”

## UPPING THE GAME

Rental operators agree that keeping quality and service levels high will be essential to success in 2020.

“It’s important to maintain quality customer service, keep those relationships, stay fresh and innovative, and stay on top of trends so that your clients continue to not only return, but refer you to others because you stand out from competition,” Rouffe says.

A top trend today—the focus on sustainability and reusing goods—can be a winning hand rental.

“Sustainability is an ongoing challenge we set ourselves, and we are seeing 2020 as our year to ensure that we reduce our carbon footprint as much as possible,” Noonan says. “This is becoming a culture within the business, and all of our departments are challenged to identify ways of reducing our impact on the environment. This can be our carpentry department, which is building bespoke [custom] furniture with a reduction of transport in mind, or our operations team, which is implementing biodegradable plastic to ensure we are moving towards zero carbon footprint.” ●



**It's showtime:** Events, education and excitement—you will find it all at The Special Event and Catersource 2020. Photos this page and next by Wasio Photography.

# The Special Event + Catersource = A Winning Hand in Vegas

## The combination of these two powerhouse shows will supercharge the industry

**The Special Event and Catersource**, the leading trade shows in the event and catering space, will co-locate in 2020. The combined event will be held at Mandalay Bay in Las Vegas from March 9-12.

The combined show comes as the result of the merger of The Special Event's parent company, Informa, with Catersource's parent, UBM.

The Special Event was launched in 1985 to serve event professionals. "Catersource is the world's premier educational and supplier resource serving the catering community," says TSE show director Tara Melingonis. "By co-locating with The Special Event, our two events bring a combined audience of over 8,500 professionals and 500 suppliers together in one unmatched, sensory-stimulating environment. Ultimately, that means more

business value for all our TSE customers and the industry overall."

### BIG SHOW IN 2020

The 2020 event will give exhibitors and attendees a 100,000-square-foot show floor featuring a broader array of suppliers and brand activations including decor, lighting, entertainment, food and beverage, technology, business services, tableware and linens, kitchen equipment, and transportation, among other features.

The combined event will also include an expanded conference program for event professionals, venue managers, chefs, caterers, restaurateurs and business owners, featuring immersive and expert-led sessions ranging from professional certification to sales and marketing strategies to artistic food presentation.



**INDUSTRY-FIRST** "This is an exciting opportunity and what's bound to be a powerhouse, industry-first event that delivers much more value to you, our customers, association partners, and the markets we serve," Melingonis says.

If you are an event planner, wedding planner, event rental company, caterer, florist, event entertainment company or any





other professional working in events, The Special Event is your show. It is the premier destination where all event professionals gather to find education, inspiration and excitement. And here are four reasons why:

### 1. NETWORKING

Thousands of event professionals come together at the industry's largest conference and trade show. It's the premier destination to connect and collaborate with event planners, wedding planners, corporate planners, meeting planners, caterers, business owners and more.

**2. LEARNING** Take advantage of the best event education in the world! The program offers attendees access to informative and highly engaging sessions across multiple conference tracks (and the opportunity to earn CE credits towards the CMP certification). There's no better place to level up your event knowledge.

**3. EXPERIENCES** A suite of amazing showcasing events awaits you in and around Las Vegas. These exciting events (each with its own theme) are produced with industry leaders to provide you with creative ideas for use in your own events. You will be transported to new worlds.

### 4. EXPLORATION

Find the solutions you need for your next event. From decor, entertainment, equipment, floral, furniture, lighting, linen and more,

the jam-packed trade show is a must-visit destination for the latest in event products and services.

The result: You will become a better event professional by attending.

The alliance of these powerful, established brands will bring unique industry all-stars from both worlds—all under one roof.

Whether you're a diehard Catersource alum, a hard-core enthusiast of The Special Event, or craving some of the much-anticipated 2020 crossover magic, this is the show for you. And if you're new to the catering and events community, you couldn't have picked a better time to get acquainted.

All the necessities, big-time game-changers, and plenty of fun perks are waiting for you. See you in Vegas! ●

**Find all the details here:**  
**[www.thespecialeventshow.com](http://www.thespecialeventshow.com)**

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# 2020 GALA AWARD *Nominees*

The best event work  
from around the world—  
it's all right here with the  
*Special Events*

Gala Award nominees.

Don't miss the  
Awards Ceremony  
on March 12 at  
**The Special Event + Catersource**  
in Las Vegas—  
it will be a winner!

By The Editors

Photography by Dung Tran from Pixabay



**BEST FAIR/FESTIVAL****“Charlotte SHOUT!”**

**Charlotte Center City Partners,  
Charlotte, N.C.**

A 13-day celebration of art, music, food and ideas, this festival featured more than 175 events for the city’s residents and visitors. Some 200,000 attendees enjoyed a diverse mix of local artists, musicians, chefs and thought leaders along with headliners such as Grammy winner Anthony Hamilton, rock band Umphrey’s McGee, and indie pop act Bleachers. Other highlights were family-focused programming, cooking demonstrations, keynote speakers and panel discussions.

**“Surrey Fusion Festival”**

**City of Surrey, Surrey,  
British Columbia, and  
MRG Events, Vancouver,  
British Columbia**

The “ultimate celebration of food, music and culture,” this two-day event saw participation from 51 pavilions and more than 200 performers across seven stages—the most stages the festival has ever hosted in its 12-year history. More than 100,00 attendees could visit the Indigenous Village, Celebrate Africa Zone and Kids Zone. Headlining acts included internationally acclaimed Somali-Canadian singer K’naan and Punjabi singer Mankirt Aulakh.

**“31st Annual Chandler Chamber Ostrich Festival”**

**Steve LeVine Entertainment and  
Public Relations, Scottsdale, Ariz.**

The Ostrich Festival started in 1989 as a celebration of the colorful early history of ostrich ranching in Chandler, Ariz., and has grown to become one of the premiere festivals in the U.S. Southwest, featuring national headliners, carnival midway games and exciting attractions. The most recent event offered chainsaw experts Bear Hollow, the Mango and Dango travelling theatrical circus show, the world’s largest bounce house, and a special meet-and-greet with Disney Junior’s PJ Masks characters.

**BEST FUNDRAISING EVENT****“The Daffodil Ball:****A Tribute to Picasso”**

**Alison Silcoff Events, Montreal**

This legendary fundraiser for the Canadian Cancer Society featured a Picasso theme in decor, entertainment and menu, focusing on Spain, primary colors and Cubism. A cascading Picasso mobile of seven cubes dominated the cocktail area, while cube-shaped tables, custom-made Picasso ceramic chargers, and three different over-the-top Picasso-inspired centerpieces created eye-catching dining-room decor. Other highlights were nuevo flamenco entertainment and dinner courses presented as works of art.

**“21st Discovery Ball”**

**California Science Center,  
Los Angeles**

The record-breaking 21st annual fund/friend-raising gala kicked off the world premiere of “Dogs! A Science Tail”—a traveling exhibition curated by the California Science Center. For cocktails, the team created a playful “puppy love” setting followed by an elegant seated dinner in a “London park” setting filled with fireflies, weeping willows and pastel English roses. After dinner, party-goers enjoyed an electric nightclub environment imagined as an oversized dog house, with upholstered hot-pink fun-fur walls and dog-themed desserts.

**“Valentine’s Day Ball: ‘Amazonia’”**

**Cava Rose, Montreal**

On Valentine’s Day 2019, Montreal’s Fondation Jeunes En Tête—which supports youth mental health programs—hosted its annual Valentine’s Fundraiser Ball. A total of 620 guests attended the gala, held inside Windsor Station, for an event themed to “Amazonia.” With lush greenery, native birds and a floor-to-ceiling video-mapped projection of a waterfall, guests were transported into an Amazon rainforest as they sipped custom cocktails, bid on luxurious auction items, and savored a traditional Brazilian feast.





**BEST EVENT PRODUCED FOR A NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION**

**“Give Kids the World Gala: A Starlite Night”**

**Hello! Destination Management, Orlando, Fla.**

Inspired by the 50th anniversary of the Mercury Space Program, the 31st annual Give Kids the World gala treated 1,350 attendees to “A Starlite Night.” Event elements include decor inspired by a Renaissance-era observatory and custom entertainment, along with a shooting-star projection screen suspended by oversized balloons, moving LED orbs, and a 170-foot kabuki drop at the after-party.

**“Boston University Campaign Victory Celebration”**  
**Stratellyst Creative, Austin, Texas**

Boston University celebrated the end of its seven-year, \$1.8-billion fundraising initiative with two milestone events: a gala dinner for 400 of the biggest donors to the university, followed the next evening by an immersive 3-D-mapped show on ice for 3,000 members of the community at large. With more than 500 performers over the course of two days, the celebration featured synchronized skaters, the college choir, band and hockey club, along with ice-skating aerialists and the entire Boston Pops Orchestra.

**“2019 IRF Invitational”**  
**360 Destination Group Florida, Hollywood, Fla.**

The 2019 Incentive Research Foundation Invitational included networking, education and destination-showcase experiences to foster relationships with 200-plus decision-makers from incentive companies and corporations, along with top supplier organizations. Crafted around “The Art of The Experience” theme, the event included transportation, on-site events, recreational activities, a registration welcome experience, and a pop-up food and beverage outlet. Collaborating with host Loews Miami Beach Hotel, the team made hotel history by using every inch of outdoor space—a first in hotel history.

**BEST WEDDING: BUDGET UNDER \$1,000 PER GUEST**

**“Eternity Wedding”**

**Bebke Productions, Even Yehuda, Israel**

The inspiration for this wedding came from the event where the couple met: the Israeli edition of the Burning Man Festival. The couple wanted to provide their guests with an artistic experience that would not end once the wedding ended. In response, the event team created craft stands where guests hammered, painted and sewed the couple’s wedding decorations and future furniture; the wedding couple’s home now holds the furniture created at the wedding.

**“Night Circus Wedding”**  
**Center of Attention Events, Burbank, Calif.**

Bringing the dream of the couple to life, the event team created the magical setting inspired by the book “The Night Circus.” Led by a stilt-walker, guests entered beneath a circus marquee sign into a black and white fantasyland filled with acrobats, magicians, music, and immersive hands-on experiences from an 1890s circus. When the couple kissed, the theme song from the movie “Up” played as a “house” floated into the air.

**“Organic Fall Wedding”**  
**Jaclyn Watson Events, New York, and Drape Art Designs, Wakefield, R.I.**

During peak foliage season in Vermont, the couple treated their 165 guests to a rustic-yet-elegant wedding at an 18th century estate. Bagpipers led the couple to their ceremony, then guided guests to a reception offering a full oyster bar followed by dinner in a sailcloth tent. After dinner, the bride surprised her groom by hopping onstage to play drums with the band.







**BEST WEDDING: BUDGET  
\$1,000 AND ABOVE PER GUEST**  
**“Free-Spirited Musical  
Extravaganza in NOLA”**

**Kristin Banta Events,  
Studio City, Calif.**

Inspired by the 1970s free-spirited style of Fleetwood Mac songbird Stevie Nicks plus with the sultry ambiance of New Orleans’ French Quarter, this wedding set at the New Orleans Museum of Art featured a dusk ceremony in the sculpture garden under Spanish moss, an opium den-inspired cocktail reception, and an after-party inside the museum. A three-hour concert featured an all-star line-up of family and friends, all professional performers and musicians.



**“Modern Minimalist Wedding  
in Carmel”**

**Kristin Banta Events,  
Studio City, Calif.**

Underscoring the couple’s effortless style, this modern minimalist wedding combined hard with soft in a luxe, neutral palette featuring industrial textures and organic accents. Held at Carmel Valley Ranch’s [Calif.] hilltop setting with its jaw-dropping views, the ceremony incorporated a prism frame strung with copper pendants. Afterwards, guests enjoyed sunset cocktails followed by a reception featuring a luxurious collection of tablescapes, a custom dance floor, and a pendant installation overhead.



**“Choksi-Patel Ballroom Wedding”**  
**Something Fabulous, Detroit**

With guests from all around the world, this Indian wedding extravaganza aimed to create an atmosphere that felt like home for the couple and their 400 guests. From a 24-hour hospitality suite to live entertainment, guests were treated to a once-in-a-lifetime experience to celebrate the couple’s marriage. Careful planning made the most of resources; for example, the mandap was repurposed as a dessert stage with cotton candy hanging from the mandap structure.

**BEST MULTIPLE-DAY  
EVENT PROGRAM FOR  
A CORPORATION OR  
ASSOCIATION**

**“Amway Achievers 2018”**

**Hello! Nashville Destination  
Management, Nashville, Tenn.**

Some 5,000 guests poured into Nashville, Tenn., for the only incentive program that Amway hosts in North America. Since the city is better known for bar-hopping than family-friendly events, the team wove a “Reflections of Tennessee” storyline throughout the program. Over the week, the event showcased the city’s natural Southern charm and world-famous venues, all while incorporating events suitable for both children and adults.

**“SHRM  
Annual Conference 2019”**  
**INVNT, New York**

The SHRM Annual Conference is a must-attend event for human resources professionals seeking to enhance their skills, stay abreast of the latest trends, get certified or re-certified, and engage in networking activities. Central to this experience are the conference’s four general sessions, which in 2019 featured four engaging set designs, the latest tech, and talent ranging from Lionel Richie and Martha Stewart to Brené Brown and Toms Shoes founder Blake Mycoskie.

**“Walmart Associate and  
Shareholders Meeting”**  
**LEO Events, Memphis, Tenn.**

Combining elements of a Grammy Award-level spectacular with general sessions, the annual Walmart Associate and Shareholders Meeting gives management a unique opportunity to share plans with 14,000 associates. In June, Walmart associates gathered for a week-long celebration, beginning with business-unit meetings followed by a concert night and concluding with the associate and shareholders meeting. Here, a group of Walmart associates performed an opening number that showcased talents including singing, dancing, and instrument playing, then announced the host of the show, actress Jennifer Garner.





### **BEST TENT INSTALLATION** **“Enchanted Woodland Wedding on the Lake”**

**Jaclyn Watson Events, New York, and Drape Art Designs, Wakefield, R.I.**

For a wedding at the bride’s family farm on the shores of Lake Champlain in New England, the event team’s goal was to unite the elements of land, sea and sky. Light strands above the clear-top tent created a vivid night sky, while unique light installations helped guests flow from the main tent to lounge areas. From macramé hammocks strung between trees to a driftwood chuppah, each detail helped set the stage for a stunning celebration.



### **“Private Waterfront Wedding”** **Stamford Tent and Event Services, Stamford, Conn.**

Despite site challenges that included rocky, uneven ground and an infinity pool that had to be covered to accommodate the 250 guests, the event team created an installation that functioned as an extension of the bride’s family home. A fully floored 15- by-30-meter Losberger structure for dining and dancing with an open 16- by-50-foot open front porch connected to a 52- by-52-foot floored deck erected over the swimming pool. An integral dormer created an elegant entry foyer for the dining tent.



### **“Circus World Celebration: Under the Big Top”** **The RK Group, San Antonio**

This 95th “birthday spectacular” celebrated a beloved mother, business pioneer and community leader. The circus-themed event keyed on the three-ring tents of old, with guests transitioning into three separate, spectacular tented environments supported with more than a half-dozen smaller tents used for operations. The three primary tents were a 30- by-50-meter clearspan structure, a 50-meter round tent, and a 40- by-60-meter clearspan structure.

**2020 GALA AWARD NOMINEES**

### **BEST ACHIEVEMENT IN TECHNICAL SUPPORT** **“Phish New Year’s Eve Concert”** **Future Affairs Productions, Pawtucket, R.I.**

For the lucky 22,000 who scored a ticket to Phish’s sold-out concert on New Year’s Eve in New York, a highlight was the theatrics at midnight. Cued to lyrics in the song “Mercury,” a red stage wash showcased a four-minute rain of red rose petals floating down from the ceiling across the front of the stage. At midnight, the “Mercury” theme came to life with a balloon drop of thousands of silver orbs resembling beads of mercury.



### **“Walmart Associate and Shareholders Meeting”** **LEO Events, Memphis, Tenn.**

Combining elements of a Grammy Award-level spectacular with general sessions, the annual Walmart meeting is a unique opportunity for management to share future plans with associates. A centerpiece of the 2019 meeting was a 44-foot turntable set center stage, permitting informative sessions to be presented onstage while the back half of the rotating stage was prepped for entertainment segments. Surprise performances from Lady Antebellum, Neon Trees, Maren Morris and One Republic kept the energy high during the three-hour live show.



### **“TransLink’s Transport 2050”** **MRG Events, Vancouver, British Columbia, and Creative Others, Vancouver, British Columbia**

TransLink’s regional transportation strategy, Transport 2050, was promoted with a major activation at the Pacific National Exhibition, which attracted more than 200,000 people. To accomplish the goal of determining public transportation needs in the future, the event team built a 3-D-printed scale model of metro Vancouver in 2050, which was mounted on a media table comprising nine LED screens and animated with visuals, music and narrative to tell the story of transportation—past, present and future.







**BEST ACHIEVEMENT IN LOGISTICS**  
**“Apollo 50: Go for the Moon”**  
**Linder Global Events, Washington**

The National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution collaborated with the event team to make the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon Landing an out-of-this-world experience. The public event hosted an audience of more than 500,000, presenting a 17-minute show combining full-motion projection-mapping to re-create the launch of Apollo 11. Highlights included a full-size image of the Saturn V rocket projected onto the Washington Monument.



**“Disney L.A. Screenings”**  
**Russell Harris Event Group, North Hollywood, Calif.**

With the mega media deal of Disney buying Fox, last year’s upfronts took on an entirely new face and format. To accommodate the studio’s expanding needs, the event team turned two sound stages into two very different environments for delegations of buyers and media from Asia, Europe, South America and the United States. Despite a tight turnaround time, the stages were transformed into a custom-built theater and a fully functioning restaurant.



**“BMW Vision iNEXT World Flight”**  
**VOK DAMS Events, Wuppertal, Germany**

Inspired by Jules Verne’s “Around the World in 80 Days,” the event team took the BMW Vision iNEXT to media representatives in four cities on three continents within five days. “BMW iNEXT World Flight” featured a cargo plane converted into a high-tech, futuristic stage. Surrounded by an impressive 360-degree light and media installation and presented on a built-in turntable, the program offered some 400 journalists from around the world the experience of the concept vehicle at virtually the same moment.

**BEST EVENT ENTERTAINMENT CONCEPT AND EXECUTION:**  
**BUDGET UNDER \$100,000**  
**“Passport to Luxury”**

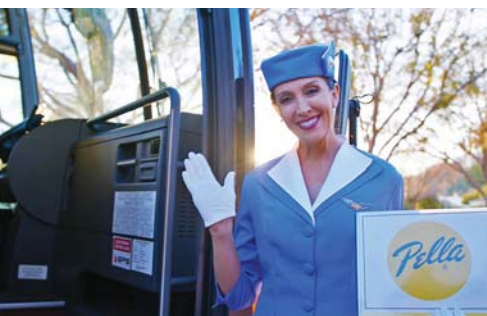
**Hello! Arizona Destination Management, Scottsdale, Ariz.**  
 The Pella President’s Club “Winner Dinner” was a special incentive celebration for the client’s top-tier sales group. The event team designed a four-hour event centered on entertainment, as the “flight crew” took the 33 VIPs on the inaugural voyage of “Pella Air Flight 001.” Guests were whisked away on the trip of a lifetime—without ever leaving their first-class seats—jet-setting around the world to enjoy cuisine from iconic destinations.

**“Investment Aktuell 2019: Life Counts”**  
**Insglueck, Berlin**

Every year, Union Investment provides the directors of its partner banks with insights into innovative topics at its annual flagship event: Investment Aktuell. This year, the program took the theme of the numbers that rule of our lives—from simple phone numbers to complex data—and showed the incredible power numbers have to shape and enrich our lives. According to the motto “Life Counts,” the theme of the campaign was translated into a multi-sensory experience designed to amaze, amuse and inspire.

**“Fusion of Past and Future”**  
**Sensix Communications and Events, Montreal, and Manina World, Montreal**

A Vision EQ electric concept car—inspired by a 1930s Mercedes-Benz championship model—guided the event team’s design for an immersive “Fusion of Past and Future” luxury brand experience. Nonstop performances fused retro and modernistic fashion, music and dance, with flappers in LED dresses, a tap-dancing/beat-boxing number, a jazz quartet with 1930s interpretations of current hits, and 7-foot tall ambassadors roaming for photos—all set against a backdrop of live IMAG transformed into electrifying screen visuals in real time.





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# MIAMI BEACH





**BEST EVENT ENTERTAINMENT  
CONCEPT AND EXECUTION:  
BUDGET \$100,000 AND ABOVE  
“Who Runs The World? Girls!”**

**Bravo! Entertainment, Dallas**

For an international beauty company's big annual event, the event team put together a custom entertainment package empowering women. The production comprised 4,000 square feet of stage, 1,000 hours of rehearsals, 40 performances in two weeks, 111 cast members from all over the United States, interactive content on 12 LED screens, 500-plus costumes, and 175 interactive props. Every moment was strategically created to reflect the brand, celebrate success, and motivate salespeople.



**“100 Year Anniversary  
Celebration”**

**Corinthian Events, Boston**

To celebrate 100 successful years of a family-owned company and its loyal employees, the event started out as what seemed to be an ordinary company party. But during the welcome, the curtains pulled back to reveal a band playing songs from “The Greatest Showman.” Some 25 circus acts exploded onto the stage and from around the venue, delighting and amazing the crowd.



**“2019 IRF Invitational”**

**360 Destination Group Florida, Hollywood, Fla.**

This multi-day event included networking, education and destination-showcase experiences to foster relationships with 200-plus decision-makers from incentive companies and corporations, along with top supplier organizations. The event team crafted the program around “The Art of The Experience” theme and incorporated a record number of entertainment components, from the welcome through the final night. Entertainment elements included acts celebrating Miami neighborhoods and an indoor beach party.

**MOST OUTSTANDING  
SPECTACLE**

**“The Iconsiam City Opening  
Mega Phenomena”**

**Index Creative Village, Bangkok**

To celebrate the opening of the Iconsiam City development, the event team created a 30-minute show for more than 550,000 guests. Keying on the theme of “the best of Thailand meeting the best of the world,” the program combined traditional Thai culture with innovative new technologies and world-class contemporary performances, including 1,500 drones, 45 LED drummers, and 200 student performers.

**“TUI Cruises ‘Mein Schiff 2’  
Naming Ceremony”**

**Insglueck, Berlin**

The naming-ceremony show for this cruise ship featured explorers from throughout the ages in a spectacular mix of dance, music and acrobatics presented in five acts, each representing a continent. Installed on the pool deck, a mast fitted with LED lights transformed the modern cruise liner into a sailboat. A spectacular fireworks show in front of Lisbon's Ponte 25 de Abril suspension bridge served as the grand finale.

**“SHRM Annual Conference 2019”  
INVNT, New York**

The SHRM Annual Conference is a must-attend event for human resources professionals seeking to enhance their skills, stay abreast of the latest trends, get certified or re-certified, and engage in networking activities. Central to this experience are the conference's four general sessions, which in 2019 featured four engaging set designs, the latest tech, and talent ranging from Lionel Richie and Martha Stewart to Brené Brown and Toms Shoes founder Blake Mycoskie.





**BEST EVENT PRODUCED FOR A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL: BUDGET UNDER \$1,000 PER GUEST**  
**"50th Birthday Celebration"**

**Corinthian Events, Boston**  
 Keying on the theme of "One Night in Singapore," the event team oversaw the buy-out of a local Southeast Asian restaurant for a birthday bash for 110 guests. Challenged with transforming the public space, the team skillfully covered intrusive windows with cling and used extensive florals to add atmosphere. The chef went all out with a wide array of appetizers, a build-your-own bahn mi station, and custom cocktails



**"Bon Voyage"**  
**Eclectic Events International, Toronto**

This retirement party reflected the honoree's personal life and his passions, which include travel, art, animals, food and music. Three food stations focused on some of his favorite destinations including Peru, Hawaii and Tuscany. Paying homage to the honoree's love of art and travel, an artist created a custom 4- by-6-foot canvas before the eyes of the guests; it was presented to him at the conclusion of the event.



**"Roses Are Pink 70th Birthday Party"**  
**WM Events, Atlanta**

On the lawn behind a private home, the team created an outdoor experience reminiscent of the Italian countryside to celebrate the honoree's 70th birthday. A "Midsummer Night's Dream" theme combined rustic romance and wedding-style accents at this intimate gathering for 30 guests, which appealed to multiple generations. After dining beneath market lights and grapevine balls at a single row of weathered farm tables, guests enjoyed a mini casino and more time to toast the birthday girl.

**2020 GALA AWARD NOMINEES**

**BEST EVENT PRODUCED FOR A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL: BUDGET \$1,000 AND ABOVE PER GUEST**  
**"An Adventure"**

**Events Man, Hong Kong**  
 Guests at this three-day extravaganza started at the Ritz Paris for champagne and high tea, and by 5 p.m. were onboard the Venice Simplon-Orient Express. The 24-hour train journey included gourmet meals, fine wines and a rollicking party that rolled through four countries. Upon arrival in Venice, guests were whisked to the Hotel Cipriani and a masquerade ball featuring a performance by Kylie Minogue.

**"The Magic of Music and Literature"**  
**Kristin Banta Events, Studio City, Calif.**

Two years in the planning, this b'nai mitzvah showcased the twins' unique personalities by highlighting their individual passions and talents, largely focusing on literature and classical music. In order to captivate kids and adults alike, the event team developed an innovative, experiential concept that transported guests into a whimsical setting from the moment they entered the event. Music and literature were brought to life as instruments and books took flight throughout the space.

**"Circus World Celebration: Under the Big Top"**  
**The RK Group, San Antonio**

Celebrating the 95th birthday of a beloved mother, business pioneer and community leader, this event took 850 guests back to a World War II-era victory party, then to a mid-20th century circus. Three immersive environments were created in three main event tents, supported by half a dozen secondary tents in a site offering little infrastructure. Entertainment ranged from three dozen authentic circus performers, Indian elephants and WWII-style bands to country legend Lee Greenwood.







**BEST EVENT MARKETING CAMPAIGN**  
**“Facebook Creators Lounge at VidCon 2019”**

**Gallagher, Los Angeles**

Facebook has hosted a Creators Lounge for several years at VidCon, one of the largest conventions in the world for social media creators. To offer an elevated experiential atmosphere along with highlighting the new platform launch—the Facebook Creator Studio, which provides audio and video production tools to create content in Facebook—the event team created a video production studio that included editors, so that professional videos could be shot and edited on-site.



**“SAP’s Design to Operate Eye Control Showcase”**  
**MCI Deutschland, Berlin**

The SAP vision of “Intelligent Enterprise” was staged at the 2019 Hanover Trade Fair through an interactive storytelling concept focusing on the “Digital Supply Chain.” The goal was to use a target-group product to make the networked competencies of SAP tangible. Using augmented reality guided only by eye control, the viewer was enabled to intuitively dive into three dimensions at the same time, and experience a constant interplay of the real exhibit and its “digital twin.”



**“BMW Vision iNEXT World Flight”**  
**VOK DAMS Events, Wuppertal, Germany**

Inspired by Jules Verne’s “Around the World in 80 Days,” the event team took the BMW Vision iNEXT to media representatives in four cities on three continents within five days. “- iNEXT World Flight” featured a cargo plane converted into a high-tech, futuristic stage. Surrounded by an impressive 360-degree light and media installation and presented on a built-in turntable, the program offered some 400 journalists from around the world the experience of the concept vehicle at virtually the same moment.

**BEST EVENT VENUE**  
**Birch Aquarium at Scripps San Diego**

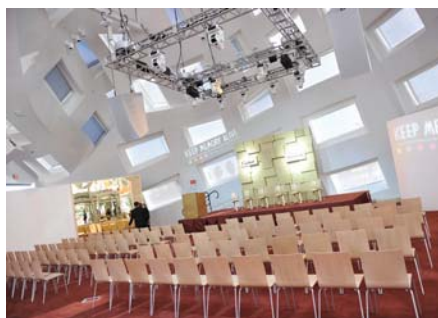
Located high on a bluff with dramatic ocean views, this one-of-a-kind facility features a stunning two-story kelp forest. At more than 30,000 square feet, the facility can accommodate up to 1,500 guests with multiple setup configurations. From an intimate dinner for 15 in front of the giant kelp forest to a bash for 1,500 that takes full advantage of the venue’s nontraditional setting, guests are able to explore ocean habitats, get hands-on with science, and enjoy some of the best ocean views in southern California.

**Keep Memory Alive Event Center Las Vegas**

Designed by superstar architect Frank Gehry, the venue offers a 9,800-square-foot Event Center with capacity for 400 seated and 700 standing; this figure rises to 1,500 once outdoor spaces are included. All told, the center offers 68,000 total square feet of interior space. Event proceeds benefit Keep Memory Alive, which supports the Cleveland Clinic Lou Ruvo Center for Brain Health.

**The Armory / Entourage Events Group Minneapolis**

Dating back to the 1930s, this iconic venue is an historic landmark in the heart of Minneapolis. The indoor/outdoor space is designed to offer maximum options for customization and scalability, with the ability to accommodate groups from 25 to 8,000 guests, offering top-flight event management, catering, and audiovisual and production capabilities.





**BEST DECOR: TOTAL DECOR  
BUDGET UNDER \$250,000**  
**"Curtain Call Ball"**

**BeEvents, Minneapolis**

As the first social soiree of the fall and the biggest fundraiser of the year, the Curtain Call Ball brings 450 social and corporate patrons together to benefit the Children's Theatre Co. Working with only a tagline this year, the event team imagined a Marie Antoinette-inspired palace with rich colors and textures, then added a dash of punk-rock attitude for a truly magical experience. With hand-drawn art, living decor, gilded castles and mythical mazes, the team designed an event fit for the nobles of Versailles.



**"Fantasy Forest"**  
**To Be Designed Events, San Diego**

For this 300-person sit-down dinner, the team's objective was to tell a complex story based entirely on design. The team had three goals: to convey the growth of the client—a law firm celebrating its 10th year; to include the firm's and its clients' earth-friendly interests; and to create a one-of-a-kind dinner in a museum setting. The design theme developed from small greenery touches at the entrance and ended with dinner in a magical woodland, where stunning imagery of the world's forests surrounded guests.



**"Petite Forêt"**  
**Wei Zhang, Beijing**

A bridal couple realized their dream of a unique wedding when the event team created an exquisite forest inside a banquet hall. Using only natural elements—including living trees—the preparation schedule took a full five months. The event team used 360-degree immersive design in a traditional hotel banquet hall to create the breathtaking setting.

**BEST DECOR: TOTAL DECOR  
BUDGET \$250,000 to \$500,000**  
**"Alice in Wonderful Orlando"**  
**CSI DMC, Falls Church, Va.**

Just like Alice tumbling down the rabbit hole, guests were delighted by this immersive event themed to Alice in Wonderland. The event team brought three event spaces to life with a cohesive, interactive design for 1,300 attendees. The whimsical event asked guests to follow the White Rabbit to visit the Caterpillar and the Red Queen's Croquet Court, sip tea with the Mad Hatter, and celebrate VIPs in the Enchanted Garden.

**"San Francisco Symphony  
Opening Night Gala"**  
**Got Light, San Francisco, and  
Blueprint Studios, San Francisco**

The San Francisco Symphony opening night gala drew more than 3,000 attendees to celebrate conductor Michael Tilson Thomas' 25th and final season as music director. The event featured six unique venues for attendees, including four dinner spaces, a street party, and a backstage VIP lounge. The exclusive Patrons' Pavilion dinner tent featured eight stunning chandeliers and transformed from dinner service into a dance party.

**"Holiday Party"**  
**USAA, San Antonio**

Some 23,000 attendees entered a Wonderland forest, falling down a rabbit hole into a fantasy world populated by fanciful creatures. After interacting with Alice, the Mad Hatter and the Queen of Hearts, guests ventured into three exhibit halls to enjoy a live performance by legendary rock 'n' roll band Journey. Others ventured to the third floor and into a Mad Hatter Holiday—a fun and funky space complete with curved spandex screens, video projections, and a giant crazy clock illuminating the dance floor.







**BEST DECOR: TOTAL DECOR  
BUDGET ABOVE \$500,000  
“BFD”**

**MGM Resorts Event Productions,  
Las Vegas**

For a surprise party celebrating a milestone birthday for a high-profile client, the 200 VIP guests went on a journey through three distinct celebration experiences. The hotel ballroom setting—a 17,542-square-foot space—was completely reimagined and transformed into separate rooms: a cocktail reception area, a sit-down dinner space, and a high-end club. Once the elaborate floor-to-ceiling decor was installed, not an inch of the walls nor the convention room carpeting was visible.



**“Ski Chalet Holiday Soiree”**

**Silhouette Group, New York**

It was a chilly December night in Austin, Texas, as 500 guests walked through the unassuming doors of an airport hangar into the base of a snowy mountain in a “ski village.” After cocktails, a grand doorway entrance led to dinner, where guests were transported to the top of the mountain and inside the dining room of the “ski chalet.” Guests found their seats at king dining tables, where elaborate runners of florals, greenery, fairy lights, birch wooden stubs and surprise elements such as antlers drew “oohs” and “aahs” from guests.



**“Come Fly with Me”**

**Southwest Conference Planners,  
Scottsdale, Ariz., and M Group  
Scenic Studios, Scottsdale, Ariz.**

For an event where a typical desert experience wouldn’t do, the event team designed an evening inspired by luxury air travel from the 1950s and ’60s. A hangar was transformed into a vintage international flight experience with custom-built scenic fuselages perched on illuminated acrylic platforms and lounge spaces featuring soft leather and sleek high-backed seating. Video projections on the walls drew the space in and provided engaging content via video, lithograph and silhouetted images of maps and planes.

**BEST EVENT PRODUCED  
FOR A CORPORATION OR  
ASSOCIATION: BUDGET  
UNDER \$500,000**

**“Toronto Region Board of Trade  
131st Annual Dinner”**

**Fifth Element Group, Toronto**

With “innovation” as the theme of the 131st annual Board of Trade dinner, the event team keyed on a custom centerpiece—a levitating lightbulb centerpiece—that was a showstopper. Each table featured custom-printed and die-cut charger mats to underscore the event’s branding objectives. The event ended with dignitaries onstage for a confetti drop to celebrate the board’s 175th year.

**“Haus Laboratories Brand  
Product Launch Party”**

**Gallagher, Los Angeles**

Founded by Lady Gaga, Haus Laboratories prides itself on not being “just another beauty brand,” so the event team celebrated this approach with avant-garde settings and a guest list to match. The hangar venue was broken into activity zones including a laboratory-themed makeup trial store, an elevated gastronomy experience, celebrity lounge, VIP DJ booth area, night club, backstage lounge, and VIP trailer. A light show heralded Gaga’s entrance, which concluded with a kabuki drop that revealed the makeup lab.

**“Luma Park”**

**Verve the Live Agency, Dublin**

To enliven a dark winter night, Google’s holiday party for 3,500 was designed as a playground of light where guests could immerse themselves in art, technology and unforgettable experiences. Highlights included a Glitter Room, the Ready Set Glow room complete with its own LED entrance arch, and an industrial bubble machine releasing 9,000 haze-filled bubbles per minute throughout the main stage performance. Because the nearly 300-year-old venue had no catering facilities, the team installed four kitchen areas, along with gas and water connections.





**BEST EVENT PRODUCED  
FOR A CORPORATION OR  
ASSOCIATION: BUDGET  
\$500,000 AND ABOVE**

**“The Iconsiam City Opening”**

**Index Creative Village, Bangkok**

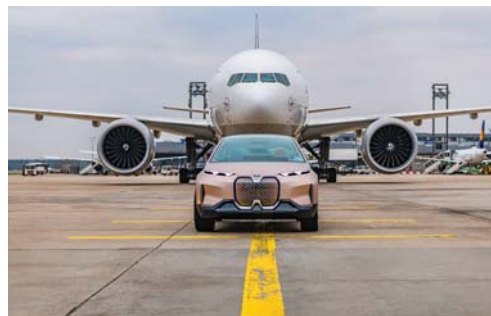
Excitement about the opening of this \$1.5 billion mixed-use project, including one of the largest shopping malls in Asia, grew after photos of rehearsals leaked to the public. Photos of a stunning ceremony that threw the spotlight on the “lotus” structure of the development were front-page news on every major news outlet and on the social media feeds of Thailand’s best-known influencers, cementing the development as a household name in Thailand.



**“World Premiere Porsche 911  
‘Timeless Machine’”**

**Pure Perfection, Wiesbaden,  
Germany**

Porsche founder Ferry Porsche’s notion of the “timeless machine” became the guiding principle and content source for the press launch of the latest model 911 for both live and online audiences. The event team created a time tunnel—250 meters long and 25 meters wide—as the launch stage for a retrospective journey showcasing the eight generations of the 911. The hybrid staging worked for the live audience of 400 as well as the 2.4 million viewers online.



**“BMW Vision iNEXT World Flight”  
VOK DAMS Event Group,  
Wuppertal, Germany**

Instead of bringing the global press to the presentation venue, BMW decided to spin the usual concept and bring the iNEXT to the press instead. The BMW iNEXT World Flight was an industry first: a cargo plane converted into a high-tech, futuristic stage. Surrounded by an impressive 360-degree light and media installation and presented on a built-in turntable, the display enabled some 400 journalists from around the world to experience the concept vehicle at virtually the same moment. ●

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## FOOD FOR FÊTES



**Still in fashion:** Old fashioned from the St. Anthony Hotel.

# Good Libations: Healthy Cocktails Are a Hit

**From antioxidant elixirs with fruity infusions to small-batch booze with vintage vibes—the new decade promises the best of both.**

**By Susan Cuadrado**

### TO YOUR HEALTH—LITERALLY

Not unlike current health-conscious culinary movements (can you say “plant-based?”), cocktails are indeed becoming, to use the millennial buzz phrase, “more intentional.”

“There seems to be a movement to more refined, cleaner cocktails,” says Ardi Dulaku, beverage manager for L’Auberge de Sedona, Sedona, Ariz. “Cocktails were getting a little messy and overwhelming in recent times.”

Low- to no-alcohol drinks, relying on carbonation and exotic fresh juices such as quince or even light wines such as Muscadet, are more frequently requested, he says, especially in the afternoon to avoid the risk of over-consumption. Using Seedlip—a distilled non-alcoholic spirit—“is another great way to have a non-alcoholic gin and tonic or martini,” he adds.

Juyoung Kang, lead bartender at The Dorsey at the Venetian Resort, Las Vegas, has noticed a shift as well. “There has been a huge surge of people asking for non-alcoholic beverage offerings using fresh-juice cocktails and cold-brew coffee mixes,” she says. Not something you would necessarily expect in Vegas, which says a lot.

To meet the demand for quality “mocktails” and

cocktails alike, fruits and vegetables are juiced daily at all three of the property’s bars. “Healthy drinking is a big theme right now,” Kang says. “But moderation, of course, is a key element.”

Likewise, the Fairmont Dallas daily hand-presses signature juice blends including beet, honeycrisp apple, cayenne-cucumber, lime-cilantro, and pear-ginger-carrot to offer guests at its Pyramid Bar.

**GET FRESH** At Harrah’s Resort Southern California in Funner, Calif., fresh locally grown fruits and herbs provide the perfect foil to the property’s signature vodka cocktails and sangrias, as evident in its strawberry-rhubarb-infused Popular Demand martini and pamplemousse [grapefruit] sangria. “It is apparent the latest craze focuses on a healthier cocktail made from light, fresh, local ingredients,” says mixologist Kayla McDonald. “Our vodka cocktails and sangrias incorporate fresh fruits and are a lighter offering for those looking for a healthier cocktail.”

Coconut milk, fresh herbs such as sage and basil, as well as vitamin-rich blackberries and dragon fruit are among the key ingredients in cocktails crafted



**Holy smokes:** From the Fairmont Dallas, the Smoked Old Fashioned (above). Berries grace an old fashioned from the St. Anthony (inset below).



by Nui Sendee at Uncasville, Conn.-based Casino of the Sky at Mohegan Sun.

Mixers such as hibiscus tea, house-made shrubs, and simple syrups are stars in nonalcoholic drinks. As far as booze goes, Sendee sees a rise in gin consumption, which is being touted as a healthier alcohol due to its lower calorie content and purported antioxidant properties. “It’s being mixed with unique ingredients like sakura and other botanicals.

More people are asking for a healthier spirit, and gin is a great candidate.”

**IN GOOD SPIRITS** In addition to the aforementioned gin, spirits such as bourbon, tequila and mescal continue to grow in popularity. “Tequila and mescal are here to stay,” Dulaku says. “And gins are going strong, as they complement the demand for carbonation, which has been propelled by canned drinks such as [hard seltzer] White Claw. Bourbon is still very popular, and it is only going to get more international attention with distillers experimenting with new barrels, water and grains.”

Kang concurs. “I also see more people drinking gin versus vodka. Whiskies and gins have been gaining popularity for the last 10 years,” she says. “People are more educated on trends—what’s new and what’s cool. They’re not afraid of cocktails with complex flavors. The trend of quality over quantity factors in quite a bit.”

At Harrah’s Southern California Resort, classics such as



**Nailed it:** The Shore Lodge’s Perfect Pig Manhattan is made with WhistlePig 10 Year rye whiskey and embellished with a real brass nail cocktail pick.



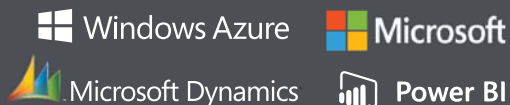


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old fashioned and Manhattans are smoked with applewood and hickory for a modern twist. The St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio flavors its signature old fashioned with spiced pecan-infused Makers Mark bourbon—a nod to its location on a former pecan and peach orchard.

“Small-batch, single-barrel whiskeys are booming right now, and we’ll continue to see major demand for them this year,” says Taylor Nissen, beverage program manager and sommelier at McCall, Idaho-based Shore Lodge. He notes that rye in particular has made a roaring comeback.

“It’s an exciting time for vintage and craft cocktails. More bartenders are using high-quality spirits to re-create old classics with innovative twists,” Nissen says. “Experientialism will continue to thrive in 2020 as bartenders re-create classic creations to make the perfect photogenic cocktail.” To that end, the Shore Lodge’s Perfect Pig Manhattan is made with WhistlePig 10 Year rye whiskey and embellished with a real brass nail cocktail pick.

Vodka, though perhaps not trending now, will always be a bar staple for its mutable and mixable qualities. Menelik Tefera, general manager at Pyramid bar and Restaurant at the Fairmont Dallas, favors Austin-made Tito’s vodka for the Pyramid’s famed Smokey Rose cocktail (vodka infused with roasted lemons with collapsed rosemary and agave syrup). Additionally, their version of a West Texas favorite—Ranch Water—combines Tito’s, Topo Chico seltzer (no substitutes!) and fresh lime juice. ●

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**Go for the gold:** Gold Geomod charger mats from All Occasions Party Rental.

# Rental Trends: Color and Custom Looks Will Rule

**Goodbye to minimalism—rental clients today want something special.**

**By Kelly Rehan**

**What looks will** rule in event rental in the Roaring 2020s? Think color and custom, rental leaders say.

“As we exit a decade full of minimalist looks, I think you will see the monochromatic style fade away,” says Lindsey Saxon, account executive at Cleveland-based Event Source. “You will see designs introducing styles with bold colors, whether that be through chairs, linens, dinnerware or even floral.”

Events are also moving away from “family style” in favor of more individualized elements, says Brigitte Bates, business development manager of Teterboro, N.J.-based Party Rental Ltd.

**GOING GREEN** A major color for 2020 will be green—as in sustainability. “Popularity for ‘green’ or sustainable weddings has grown,

and renting items fits by significantly reducing paper and plastic waste,” says Michael Berman, CEO of Stuart Event Rentals in Milpitas, Calif. “We are regularly setting up recycling stations at receptions.”

Another factor shaping the look of event rental this year: the incredible power of social media.

“Everyone is thinking about projecting their hashtag moments to ensure their event is considered successful by their friends,” Berman says. “The impact for rental companies is the increased challenge of providing products that set the stage for stunning visuals.”

Social media and the mighty smartphone not only help event hosts share the look of their events with the world; these tools also help rental companies better understand their clients.

“The visualization aspect of social media, such as Pinterest and Instagram, has assisted with communication and better understanding client needs, as they are able to show us what they are looking for rather than just describing their ideas,” says Heather Rouffe, managing partner at Atlas Event Rental, headquartered in Boynton Beach, Fla.

But social media sometimes can be too much of a good thing.

“At times in our industry and others, popular looks can become a little too recycled online,” says Kathleen Schmidt, account executive with Arlington, Va.-based DC Rental. “So it’s important to keep the mix eclectic when purchasing new inventory.” She adds, “We also love hearing from clients, who saw something reimagined on



**You pick:** A range of pretty glasses (right) plus a colorful linen from Atlas Event Rental (below).



Instagram. You never know when you may give new life to an older inventory item. Everyone loves a remix.”

**TALKING TABLES** Dining table trends in 2020 will feature an endless mix of scheme combinations. The rules? There aren’t any.

“We will continue to see is a mix of shapes, textures and height,” Saxon says. “Height is a fun way to change up a table scene. Adding height to the room really draws the eye to new levels. You can also add texture to your tables by mixing and matching linen and linen-less tables.”

Color is another powerful way rental companies will keep things interesting in 2020.

“Colored glassware pops mixed with classic styles has been a popular trend,” says Whitney Demchak, creative director of Eighty Four, Penn.-based All Occasions Party Rental. “Adding a colored or specialty water goblet gives the advantage of bringing color or theme to the table while keeping the rest of the glassware classic and clear for an elegant combination.”

**GET THAT GOBLET** A speaking of water goblets ...

“The day of the water goblet is back,” says J. Riccardo Benavides, founder and creative director of Ideas Events and Rentals, San Francisco. “More clients are focused on glassware that isn’t for alcohol, since many are focused on health, and a great water goblet can bring panache to an otherwise forgotten beverage.”

Top rental companies know that everything can be customized. In 2020, companies will be challenged to put a custom spin on every event, even when budgets are tight.

“Many couples match a napkin or chair cushion to a color featured in their invitation, which is a subtle way to customize without blowing a budget,” Bates says.

For an event celebrating the 50th anniversary of the moon landing, Schmidt shares how DC Rental customized the tops of its white leather drum tables with an image of the surface of the moon.

“We love it when clients think outside of the box,” she says. ●

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# The Wonderful World of 2020

# COLOR

**“Color combinations** that are in for 2020 will definitely be shades of blue—especially [Pantone] Classic Blue as well as deeper blues—as we expected even before learning it would be Pantone’s color of the year! We are also expecting to see a lot of the deep burgundy velvets combined with blush. Mint and citron are also gaining popularity. These colors are great paired with tropical linens or even as the linen itself if you are looking for statement pieces. Sophisticated shades of purple will carry over from 2019, along with rust tones, blues, metallics and white/ivory.”

— **Heather Rouffe, Atlas Event Rental**

“Brighter colors are replacing the neutrals and pastels. People aren’t as afraid to use color on the table with their flowers and with their napkins—stronger pinks, blues and greens, especially. Also, we see more mixing of textures, woven styles and velvets.” — **Brigitte Bates, Party Rental Ltd.**



**They come in colors:** An array of colored goblets from Standard Party Rentals; [www.standardpartyrentals.com](http://www.standardpartyrentals.com).

“We’re seeing rich hues take the lead from the softer palettes of the previous years. Deep blues, rich greens, and other jewel tones will make bold statements in 2020 designs.” — **Kathleen Schmidt, DC Rental**

“Terrain tones—all shades of greens and blues. Think Southwest too—turquoise, sand, pops of sunset colors.” — **J. Riccardo Benavides, Ideas**

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## THE LAST WORD



# It's All In The Detail + Design

**Gene Huddleson and crew make cooperation count.**  
By Lisa Hurley

- **HIS STRONG SUIT:** “It’s having an open mind, and listening to people who are younger than I am.”
- **I WISH I WERE BETTER AT:** “Using technology. I am old school and seem to be playing catch-up.”
- **I WISH I’D LEARNED SOONER:** “Gauging the economy and paying attention to indicators. And, when to say goodbye to a vendor when they cross the line with clients.”
- **WHAT’S BETTER SINCE HE STARTED:** “Communication, opportunities and finance, and the sharing of ideas globally. Technology enables us to communicate to guests or conference attendees quickly.”
- **AND WHAT’S WORSE:** “It used to be more boutique—designers, planners, lighting designers, caterers. Now it seems those specializations have molded into one-stop shops—sometimes good, but more often not. With one-stop shops, it becomes about inventory, making that work to reach a bottom line. With boutiques, you get more creativity, always changing and putting together new ideas.”

**His journey started** in California 30 years ago, when he worked as a volunteer for AIDS Project Los Angeles for various events. There, L. Gene Huddleson was introduced to event industry pioneer John Daly. Huddleson credits Daly with opening doors to vendors and experiences available nowhere else.

Another L.A. pro he is quick to credit: Cheryl Irwin of Irwin Productions. “I traveled across the country with John as well as Cheryl and absorbed everything around me,” Huddleson says. “John taught me extravagance and to always create beyond what is in front of you. Cheryl taught me building blocks for events and symmetry with design.”

After L.A., Huddleson spent three years in New York, a period that showed him the rough and tumble side of the event industry. “I learned how not to do an event or treat employees and vendors,” he says. The bright spot: working with JoAnn Gregoli of Elegant Occasions. “She planned and created beautiful weddings and events, and allowed me to create along with her.”

Huddleson moved to Indianapolis in 1997—“not intending to stay,” he notes. But, “Now 23 years later, I own my own event company and have put all that I learned along the way to great use. I surround myself with the best event partners and treat them all with respect.”

His company Detail + Design has a unique structure. The team of seven consists of two primary partners,

their two supporting employees, two additional partners, and a general manager. Supporting them is “a small army” of contract workers, Huddleson says. The team produces more than 120 events a year, from small to large.

Huddleson says the setup pays off. “We work smart and support each other,” he says. “When one area is crazy busy, the others jump in and help out. Teamwork really does make the dream work in our office.” Another challenge to overcome is the fact the company works on projects across the U.S. “Working in different markets mean you have to communicate on a weekly basis for the big picture and also touch base on a daily basis for details,” Huddleson notes.

He stresses that communication is the key to success. “We ‘do lunch’ together all the time, and use that time to talk not only about events, but what is happening in our personal lives,” he explains.

In 2005, Detail + Design added a landscape arm, which grew out of the company’s wedding business. “Wedding clients wanted to spruce up the exterior of their homes prior to the wedding,” Huddleson explains. Along the same line, the company now also operates an interior design consultancy. “Both have ballooned into larger scale projects, which allows us to use our creative skills on a different level,” he notes. ●

**Detail + Design** 4905 E. 56th St., Indianapolis, IN 46220; 317/423-3590; [www.detailanddesign.com](http://www.detailanddesign.com)

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