

EXCLUSIVE: Top Trends Seen During The Special Event **Page 64**
Restoring & Operating Historic Event Venues **Page 16**

SPECIAL EVENTS



SUMMER 2022

THE
SPECIAL
EVENT

Shines

INSPIRATION:
A SPOOKTACULAR
NIGHT
P. 68

COOL TREATS FOR
OUTDOOR EVENTS
P. 72

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SUMMER 2022

THIS ISSUE



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On the cover: During the Closing Night Celebration (held at the Marriott Anaheim in conjunction with Catersource + The Special Event) a secret fiesta located outside of the hotel helped guests enjoy Cinco de Mayo in style. Pictured is one of the fiery costumed performers. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



EDITOR'S PAGE

MY GOLD STARS

As Harvey Mckay wrote in his, *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*, the single most common characteristic shared by truly successful people is "the ability to create and nurture a network of contacts."

I absolutely agree. The generous, intelligent people I have met since joining the catering and events industry eight years ago have been my professional lifeline. Literally, my ever-growing contacts list has helped me land incredible speakers, build robust content pillars, and explore opportunities I never would have believed possible.

You may or may not know this, but I am painfully introverted. Communicating via the written word has been my saving (career) grace and my way of connecting. I embrace one-on-one conversations but tend to freeze up in groups. So, if you are anything like me, or feel stalled in your attempts, how do you get past this to truly build up a list of people you can call on, rely upon, maybe even ask a favor of?

Here is the #1 tip I employed at Catersource + The Special Event in Anaheim: I said yes to everything I could. Yes, I will.

I'll admit that I do not have a lot of time for networking while running a conference, and I'm tired at the end of the show day. There was an evening that I went back to my room and thought, "I can't work anymore. I'm staying in, recharging, and ordering room service."

But then I chided myself: "How does that serve me in my career—especially when I am in the midst of the largest gathering of industry professionals in the U.S.?"

You guessed it. I gave myself 30 minutes of grace and then headed out again.

Saying yes to professional development through networking, especially when you are investing in a conference and tradeshow spend, is the best ROI bang for your buck.

So, say yes to the dinner or drink invitation. Say yes—I will approach that speaker with my question after their session. Yes, I will talk to that person sitting next to me on the bus to or from the event. Yes, I will join that industry association; yes, I will attend the SEARCH Foundation event.

I want to thank everyone who presented sessions at Catersource + The Special Event, to those people who volunteered on our event committees and chaired our events, and to Norm Bennett and Pawntra Shadab, our 2022 Ambassadors who, through their own contacts, were able to connect us with others. I feel like I've added a few more gold networking stars to my list of those I can rely upon, and wow—does that ever feel good.

Kathleen

Kathleen Stoehr
Director of Community & Content Strategy

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Summer 2022 THIS ISSUE

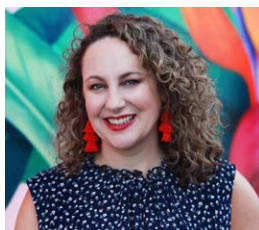
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Marketing master
Christie Osborne shares
the secret to hiring: your
business's analytics.



Tech specialist **Nora Sheils** breaks down
why and how to perform
a tech audit.



Events business
strategist **Michelle Loretta** offers three
ways to stay sane
during busy season.



Sustainability expert
Suzanne Morrel
advises how to perform
a wellness check for
spaces and places.



Contributor **Michael Costa** discusses
historical properties
renovated into event
spaces.

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LCA LEADING CATERERS OF AMERICA

Leading Caterers of America (LCA) is comprised of the top caterers and event venues in the United States and Canada. When you need a caterer to make your next event exceptional, perfect and delicious, choose an LCA caterer.

Planning something special?

Let the best of the best in all things events be your guide.



Corporate

LCA specializes in corporate events of all types - marketing, celebratory, client related, employee morale, and others. Whether held in the hosts' facility, or in an off-premise location, LCA members are able to deliver a high value corporate event experience.

Photo Credit: Catering Creations



Weddings

At its collective portfolio of some of the most desirable wedding venues in the United States and Canada, the LCA caters many thousands of weddings annually. Most LCA members have dedicated wedding specialists on staff, to ensure that this most important day is executed flawlessly, no matter the level of complexity.

Photo Credit: Bonura Hospitality Group



Social

Bar and bat mitzvahs, first communions, quinceañeras, retirements and graduations, and even funerals are all important life cycle events. Superb food and service are crucial to making these events special and memorable, and the LCA is a perfect resource for those products.

Photo Credit: Catering by Michael's



Nonprofits

Galas and fundraisers are key to the success of most charitable ventures - including both financial and membership. The LCA is highly attuned to the needs of most charities, and is a great resource for all the necessary components to make these gala events successful.

Photo Credit: G Catering

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Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Wisconsin

Photo Credit: Zilli Hospitality Group



SOUTH

Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia

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WEST

Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Nevada, Oregon, Utah, Washington

Photo Credit: DSquared Hospitality Company



EAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, DC, Ontario

Photo Credit: The Classic Catering People

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CONFERENCE NEWS

by Kathleen Stoehr



Conference updates

CS+TSE Wraps 2022 Show, Looks Toward 2023

Throughout this issue, you will be able to enjoy highlights and ideas from Catersource + The Special Event 2022, which was recently held at the Anaheim Convention Center in May. We put on a great show, and were thrilled to see so many of you, despite how busy the industry currently seems to be.

But here at *Special Events* we are already looking toward 2023, when we are back in the first quarter of the year and ready to surprise and delight everyone who attends our conference and tradeshow.

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THE SPECIAL EVENT 2023

We'll be heading to sunny Florida March 27–30, 2023 and the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC), a short 10-mile, 15-minute drive from the Orlando airport and with easy walkability to area hotels, restaurants, and entertainment options. As you read this, we at *Special Events* will have just returned from a site visit—with that, we will be ready to start planning your immersive experience, from session rooms, to evening events, to exhibit hall browsing!



YINKA FREEMAN SPOKE ON ROI AT THE 2022 SHOW IN ANAHEIM.



ALAN BERG CAPTIVATED AUDIENCES ON CONFERENCE AND TRADESHOW FLOOR STAGES AT THE 2022 SHOW.



IN 2022, ROB BARBER DISCUSSED COLLABORATION.



ALICIA SCHIRO AND **ELAINE POFELDT** MADE THEIR FIRST APPEARANCE IN 2022, TALKING ABOUT EVENTS 3.0.

WHAT'S NEW?

Big news for meeting planners and wedding pros! Recognizing that event planners cover myriad bases when engaging potential clients, The Special Event will be placing a keen eye on the needs of meeting planners in 2023, launching a new track that speaks specifically to that sector of the industry.

Additionally, while wedding education has always been a big part of The Special Event, in 2023, we are making it a priority to ensure that you have the information you need to excel. Watch for other association partnerships to deepen and expand upon the great content you expect when you attend The Special Event.

SHARING YOUR WEALTH

The Special Event's Call for Speakers is live and accepting sessions that explore culinary and event trends, social gatherings, business and professional development, sales and marketing, sustainability, and more. Visit <https://tse2023.catersource-cfp.com> for all the details you need. The Call for Speakers will be open through July 31, then we will get to the task of vetting and decision making. Don't delay—your great ideas may be just what a professional new to our industry needs to succeed or could be the spark that gives seasoned veterans a leg up in their region. Above, take note of some of the sessions reaped from our Call for Speakers 2022! ●

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DIVINE DECOR



Pavilions, starry lights, a full moon, and a scenic backdrop set the mood for the romantic evening. Photo courtesy NZ Production



A Poetic UNION

Bringing poetic culture to life through imaginative wedding décor

By Amanda Nicklaus

Theme weddings are popular, and it's not hard to imagine why: strong visual aesthetics often transport guests into a memorable and unique experience. But designer Wei Zhang took the meaning of "theme" to another level, using the event to teach guests about tradition and culture.

The groom, a self-professed poetry fan, wanted to embody the culture of poetry—specifically Chinese poetry—so Zhang created a wedding structured around the poem *Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye*, a beloved Chinese poem by Xiang Ruoxu of the Tang Dynasty. Translated, the title means "spring river flowers and moonlit night." The wedding, following three acts, modeled each chapter and scene, using the poem's symbols and visuals to bring the story to life.

Lights, flowers, and a 270-degree circular screen with vivid original video scenery set the ambience of the evening. When the ceremony began, a full moon ascended, and guests were transported to a charming countryside filled with Chinese architecture, including pavilions and terraces. Zhang's skills were on full display with the creation of a "river" using a screen laid across the ground, simulating a calm flowing body of water across the venue. On the "river" sat a boat made of lights, a central image of the poem. At the end of the ceremony, a video of fireworks (a Chinese invention) played. Zhang used a mirror surface to reflect a smattering of light



across the ceiling, creating the illusion of a starry sky reflected across the water's surface.

The stunning visual effects brought the poem to life in a breathtaking display of poetic aesthetic. In this way, the romance of Western wedding design was combined with the tradition and culture of Chinese wedding design. Guests gushed about the success of the event, sharing on social media how much they learned about Chinese culture and saying they never imagined poetry could come to life so vividly before their eyes.

Zhang's work demonstrates how taking a risk and relying on intense creativity can transform an often-routine event into an amazing interactive experience, one in which guests can walk away with a new appreciation of a culture and its contributions to the artistic world. ●

(Above) The event space was filled with flowers, lights, a glowing moon, and screens playing video of countryside scenery. *Photo courtesy NZ Production*

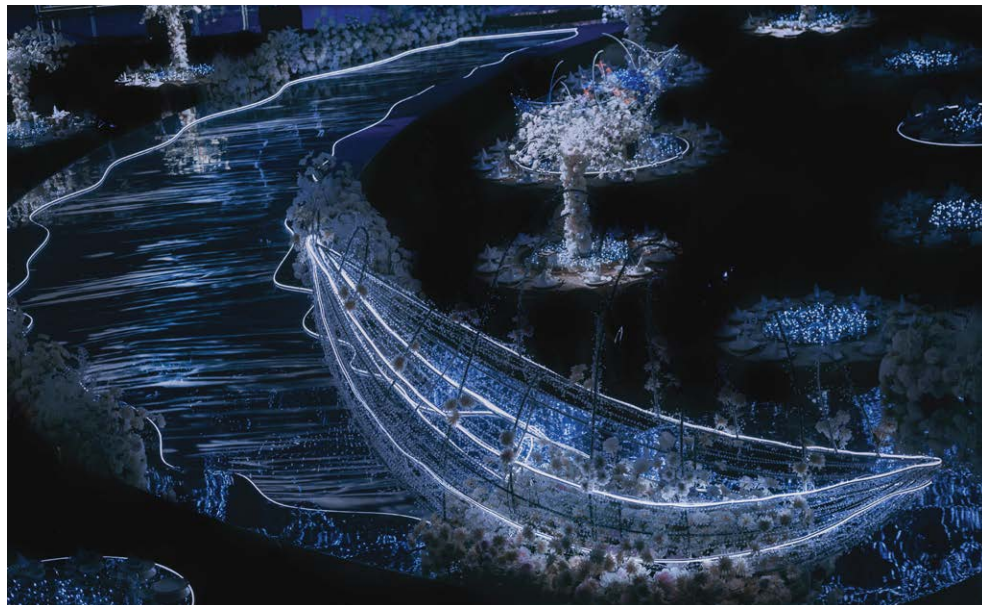
(Below) The theater location was soon transformed beyond recognition. *Photo courtesy Wei Zhang*



Wei Zhang was the 2022 Gala Award winner for the category of Total Décor.



信 望 愛



(Above) A crescent boat made of lights is one of the main symbols of the poem. *Photo courtesy NZ Production*

(Below) *Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye* is a beloved Chinese poem by Xiang Ruoxu of the Tang Dynasty. Translated, the title means "spring river flowers and moonlit night." The wedding, following three acts, modeled each chapter and scene, using the poem's symbols and visuals to bring the story to life. *Photo courtesy of NZ Production*



Gala Submissions Now Being Accepted

***It's once again time to
celebrate the best of the best!***

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2023 Special Events Gala Awards. We invite you to submit your best work from the past year. Join in the excitement and the spirit of our industry as we celebrate the hard work and exceptional accomplishments of our peers. Eligible events must have occurred between January 01, 2022 and November 30, 2022.

To submit an entry to this year's Gala Awards, please visit our awards portal at <https://ace-gala.awardsplatform.com>.



Three Ways to Stay Sane During Busy Season



By Michelle Loretta

For many in our industry, summer brings warm days full of sunshine, and also the busiest time of year. It's easy to get wrapped up in taking care of clients, managing staff, running a business—and completely leaving out personal needs. Self-care often takes a hit during busy season. I've outlined three ways to get ahead of this challenge. Plan now and proactively prevent burnout.

SET BOUNDARIES AND EXPECTATIONS

Pleasing clients comes with the territory in the hospitality and events industries. However, giving clients parameters regarding how to work best with you and your team not only preserves your sanity, but also gives them assurance that you work systematically, organized, and professionally. This includes:

- Defining your times available (aka: office hours)
- Communicating when you're unavailable because you're at an event site
- Setting expectations for your time off on weekends, vacation days, and family time

We often hold back on giving boundaries and defining expectations to our clients because we can be eager to win their business and we want to be approved at all stages of working together. This can end up canceling out any semblance of free time we might have in busy months. It also creates rudderless clients who lack guidance and feel lost.

Everyone needs structure. If you define this structure for your clients and their events, this will allow you to accommodate your personal needs, while giving your client a safe space to operate. They'll be happier for it.

FORCE DAILY BREAKS

I see far too many people trying to plan a weekend or a vacation when they're already at the breaking point and totally burned out. At this point, it's too late. A few days off may help a bit, but won't recuperate the months of overload and overwhelm (I think we can all relate to this from 2021).

Recent research on rest shows that more frequent breaks and pauses from daily work can result in better returns when compared to a binge time-off of a week or more. It's the daily recharging that keeps us fueled.

Decide what this looks like for you. Is it a commitment to daily exercise? Is it a strong morning routine of reading and meditation? Is it pausing for lunch every day? Commit to stopping work briefly throughout the day and refreshing yourself frequently. Decide on that path now before things get too crazy and you can't incorporate a new routine.

PLAN YOUR TIME OFF STRATEGY WHILE YOU'RE STILL RESTED

If you're looking at your calendar and see that you only have two weekends off for the next three months, it's time to grab those weekends for yourself and start creating plans to fill the weekend. Whether you plan to use it for travel, or staying at home and chillaxing, decide on what actions you'll take to replenish your spirit in this time.



“We often hold back on **giving boundaries and defining expectations** to our clients because we can be eager to win their business and we want to be approved at all stages of working together.”

If you don't proactively plan for how you want to use that time, the default tendency will be to catch up on housework or office work. This is not resting. Planning ahead gives you a roadmap to follow during those weekends that you may be too tired to think or plan anything.

In addition to the 10-hour nap you plan on taking, include some outdoor time, time with friends, and quality time with family. Plan ahead for the fun stuff you don't normally have time to do. Happiness research shows that we feel satisfaction when we feel accomplishment—and this goes for free time too. While I don't want you to be a treadmill of 'should haves' and 'must dos', think of this as the time to accomplish the things that bring you

joy outside your work. I promise you'll feel more energized if you proactively plan for this in advance, so that you don't have to even think about it when those weekends arrive.

Lastly, find a friend or colleague who can keep you accountable. This may be a check-in with each other monthly to gauge if you're both keeping true to these busy season strategies. Or it may be a buddy pact to ask one another how you are each feeling about stress. When we're in the thick of it, having someone from the outside check on you can be a great reset to stay committed to our burnout prevention plan. ●

Michelle Loretta is a strategist for the events industry and creator of *Be Sage Consulting*, formerly Sage Wedding Pros. She has been educating, coaching, and consulting event professionals since 2009. With a degree in accounting, roots at the Big 4 firm Deloitte, and experience as a stationery entrepreneur, she dissects numbers to help level-up businesses' earnings. Michelle wakes up each day excited to create *Financial Strategies for Wedding and Event Businesses*. She has been asked to speak at a number of industry conferences, including NACE Experience, Biz Bash Live, and The Special Event.



SURROUNDED BY *History*



THE PROS AND OCCASIONAL PITFALLS
OF RESTORING AND OPERATING
HISTORIC EVENT VENUES

BY MICHAEL COSTA

“We believe there is a secular shift in the event industry away from humdrum hotel ballrooms and saccharine corporate convention centers,” says Jordan Langer, CEO of San Francisco-based Non Plus Ultra, which oversees several historic properties for events in the Bay area and Denver. “This shift notwithstanding, the venue management and regulatory compliance complexities associated with producing large-scale events in historic properties is an extremely challenging endeavor.” Challenging is perhaps an understatement when executing catered events in venues that are often more than a century old, especially if one owns the space or has some financial interest in it. Besides frequent repairs and upkeep, working around building codes for historic structures can be an ongoing task as the need to modernize may clash with preservation.

Of course, there are also many business benefits to operating in an historic building, and here, we'll look at how some caterers and event companies have incorporated historic venues into their plans as a key differentiator among the competition.



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Historic properties like the **Taylor House** offer an engaging and memorable alternative to traditional hotels and convention spaces. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora



At Taylor House, a barrel-vaulted ceiling has been restored and accented with brass, opening the space and drawing eyes upward. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora



The library is one of many rooms with a restored original marble fireplace. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora



Neutral tones in the Taylor House create a blank canvas for a variety of events. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora

ADAPTIVE REUSE: Taylor House Conference Center

Located in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York, the 184-year-old Taylor House is part of the Inns of Aurora resort, and the centerpiece of its catering and events program.

Taylor House is an example of an historic property that has seen many uses in its lifetime: it started as the home of Henry Morgan, an early entrepreneur in Aurora from 1838–1887; then as the Wallcourt School for Girls from 1895–1928; and then as the residence of several Wells College presidents from 1936–2013.

Taylor House today has undergone nearly two decades of careful restoration so it could be used as a modern conference facility, where the first floor can accommodate up to 50 people for dinners and receptions, and the upstairs can host an additional 36 people for meetings.

Because Taylor House has been in use throughout most of its history, it was never in true disrepair like an abandoned, vacated space would be after years of being dormant, so the most recent renovation was not focused on foundational structural repairs. However, those upgrades to bring the building up to modern standards for meetings and events still needed to be completed carefully, leaving the unique architectural elements intact.

“We were able to repurpose an original servant’s staircase to add an elevator to make the building ADA compliant,” explains Sara Brown, director of sales, Inns of Aurora. “With large windows and high ceilings throughout the home, we faced exorbitant heating and cooling expenses. We were able to



The meeting rooms contain original features, like these high ceilings, large windows, and marble fireplace. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora

use the graceful lawns surrounding the home to drill wells for a state-of-the-art geothermal system that now heats and cools the home in an environmentally friendly and cost-efficient way. Upstairs, we wanted to create one large meeting space without losing the character of the original plasterwork bordering the ceiling of the center hallway. Instead of removing the entire wall, we were able to keep the beams and maintain the original plasterwork while still opening the space for an expansive meeting area.”

Other areas restored include a barrel-vaulted ceiling in the main dining room, as well as the original marble fireplaces. One historical discovery of note happened while working in the basement of Taylor House: Henry Morgan’s actual signature was found on a wall there dating to when he built the house in 1838.

“We completed our research [of Taylor House] in nearby archives during the renovation and share its history on our website and in printed collateral for clients. While the grand scale of the historic home is the backdrop for each event held here, we purposefully chose to keep interior finishes in a neutral palate so that our venue can transform into the space envisaged by each event host,” Brown says.



Careful restorations allowed the original essence and structure of the **Taylor House** to remain intact, like the beams and plasterwork in this expansive meeting room. Photo courtesy Inns of Aurora



(Above and Right) Thinking outside the box is key to repurposing old buildings for event spaces, such as in this **1913 landmark church** in Long Beach, CA. Photo courtesy Bite Catering Couture



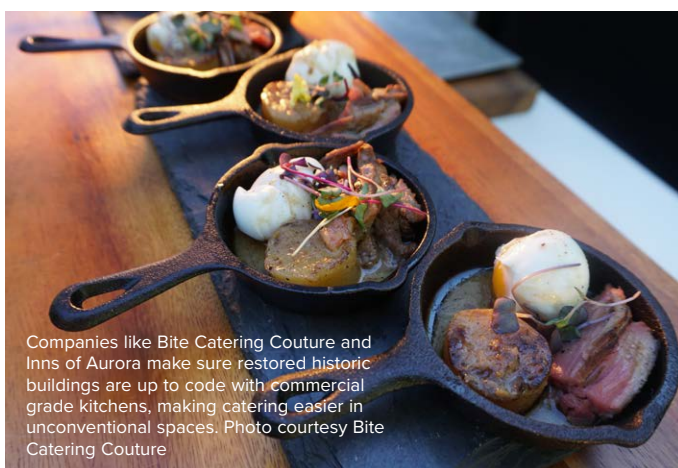
BITE CATERING COUTURE's classic church

In the Los Angeles area, the owners of Bite Catering Couture—Executive Chef Elizabeth Goel and Vijay Goel—are currently working to transform a landmark 1913 church in Long Beach into their own flagship catering venue. The church was designed by noted architect Elmer Grey, who also designed the Pasadena Playhouse, and the Beverly Hills Hotel.

The church is an example of Renaissance Revival architecture that was popular in its era, with 30-foot ceilings and a 7,500-square-foot room. “These buildings are often gorgeous, ornate spaces [that have been] built for assembly use,” says Vijay Goel. “COVID-19 led to the closing of many venues, and I think there’s the awareness that venue space, especially for weekends, is currently in high demand.”

Because the Goels are overseeing a ground-up restoration project for their business, they have learned much about the process of renovating an historic structure, which requires frequently stepping outside of the traditional catering mindset to accomplish.

“Since the church was built before code, bringing required elements up to code brings a number of challenges,” explains



Companies like Bite Catering Couture and Inns of Aurora make sure restored historic buildings are up to code with commercial grade kitchens, making catering easier in unconventional spaces. Photo courtesy Bite Catering Couture



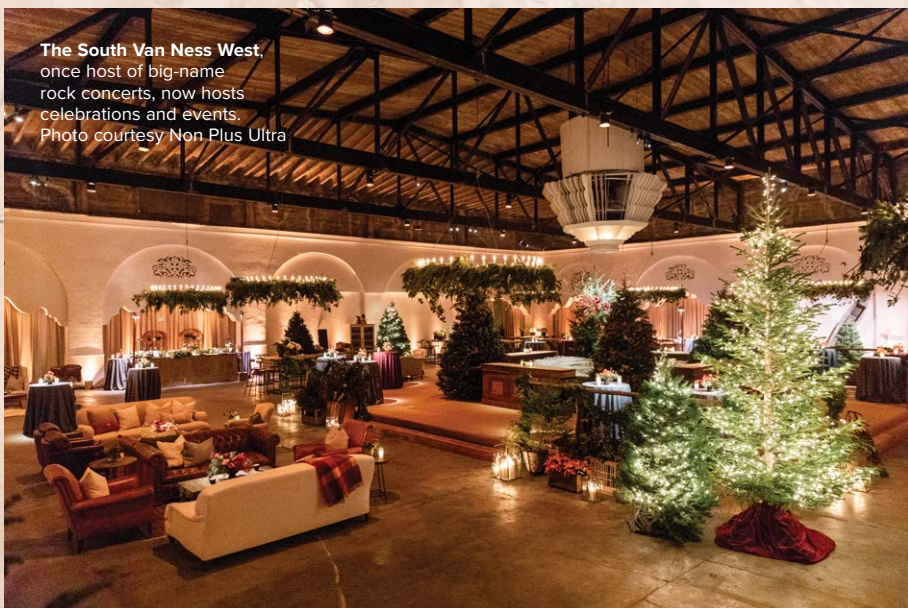
Some historic buildings can cause a challenge to traditional kitchen catering. In these cases, chefs must get creative, often yielding exceptionally fun treats, like these Potted Pot de Crème. Photo courtesy of Bite Catering Couture



Originally built for the 1915 World Fair, the **Palace of Fine Arts** has been transformed into a multi-purpose venue that can be arranged for weddings, trade shows, and more. Photo courtesy Non Plus Ultra



Historic buildings, like the **Denver Sports Castle**, provide interesting architectural details that can enrich the visuals of an event space. Photo courtesy Non Plus Ultra



The **South Van Ness West**, once host of big-name rock concerts, now hosts celebrations and events. Photo courtesy Non Plus Ultra

Vijay Goel. “If you’re going down the SBA (Small Business Administration) path and have any construction, be aware of the SBA requirements around historic buildings (Section 106). It can add substantial documentation requirements and delays, so be aware of those requirements and how you will approach them.

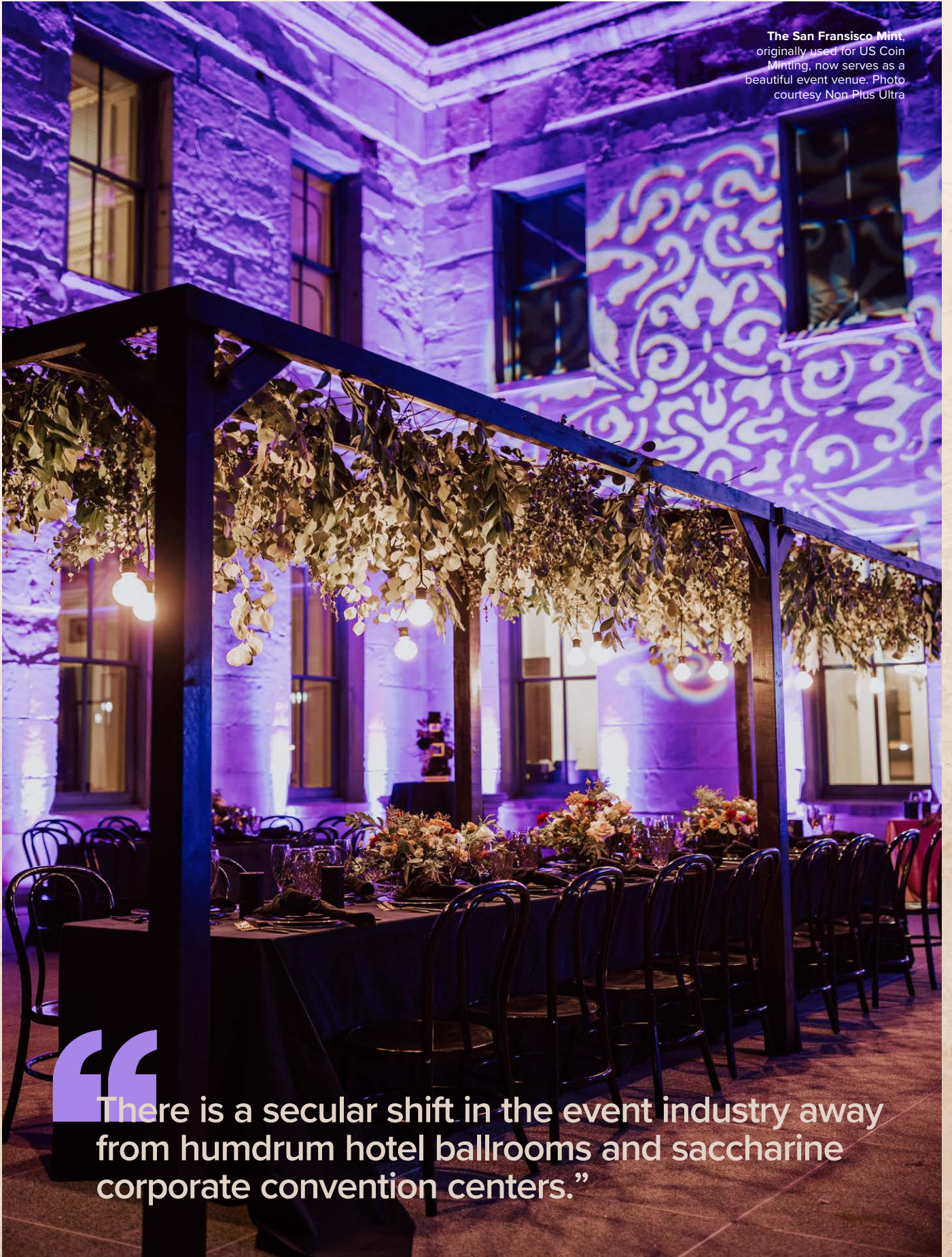
“Take on a venue where you have relationships on construction and financing elements that make it likely you’ll have enough support to get through to the other side,” he continues. “You don’t want to go into these things without seeing a clear path over the finish line. Banks want to see that you have sufficient resources to pay the mortgage even if there are substantial delays or misses on your projections.”

While the logistical challenges in restoring an historic space for catering can be daunting—especially for first-timers—there are potential advantages over choosing a newer venue with existing city codes. “Older spaces typically have grandfathered elements, like parking, that would prevent the approval of a new venue in many desirable areas of town, especially in denser urban areas,” says Vijay Goel.

While the church transformation project continues, Vijay Goel says some discoveries in the historic structure during construction continue to delight, including the discovery of a secret door under the stairs behind a bookshelf.

NON PLUS ULTRA’s lineup of historic venues

While we’ve focused on single property projects so far, other companies, like Non Plus Ultra, operate in and oversee multiple historic locations, including the Palace of Fine Arts in San Francisco (built in 1915), The Old San Francisco Mint (built in 1874) and South Van Ness (SVN) West, which used to be the famed Fillmore West, run by legendary promoter Bill Graham and host to rock concerts by the Grateful Dead, Santana,



The San Francisco Mint, originally used for US Coin Minting, now serves as a beautiful event venue. Photo courtesy Non Plus Ultra

“There is a secular shift in the event industry away from humdrum hotel ballrooms and saccharine corporate convention centers.”



(Above and Right) **The San Francisco Mint**, originally used for US Coin Minting, now serves as a beautiful event venue. Photo courtesy Non Plus Ultra

Creedence Clearwater Revival, Jefferson Airplane and others in the late 1960s and early 1970s (it closed in 1971).

Non Plus Ultra is also in downtown Denver's historic Sports Castle, an Art-Deco inspired, four-story building originally built as a Chrysler showroom, complete with car-size interior ramps between floors, and a wide grand staircase in the center.

"Our overarching priority is maintaining our portfolio of buildings and grounds in a manner that is consistent with their cultural importance. We have an in-house facilities team that ensures our properties are preserved and fully NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act) and NHPA (National Historic Preservation Act) compliant, kept in good repair, and always clean and event-ready," says Langer. "At the same time, we make it a requirement that all our venues are fully operational, meet all licensure and code requirements, and, in some instances, include commercial-grade kitchens and equipment. This can certainly be challenging at times, but if it were easy then we'd probably have a lot more competitors."

As the industry emerges from two years of virtual events, Langer concludes that historic spaces have an advantage over traditional venues in offering attendees a unique and memorable environment for what may be their first in-person gathering since the pandemic.



"The demand has never been higher for impactful in-person events, experiences, and shared cultural moments," he says. "Location and physical space are one of the most important decisions for any event producer, and historic spaces enhance the creation of an immersive experience. Immersion literally means being plunged into something that is all-surrounding. So how can you have a compelling immersive experience in a plain white box or a trade floor? I guess you can, but it is going to cost you a lot of money and still fall woefully short of historic venues like ours." ●

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Planning to Hire in 2022? Check Your Analytics First



By Christie Osborne

What if I told you the secret to hiring is hidden in your business's analytics?

When hiring new staff, there are plenty of considerations. From budgeting for employee compensation to allocating training or delegating time, effective hiring requires careful balance to ensure you find someone who adds value to your business.

Too often, however, business owners go about hiring in all the wrong ways. Perhaps you think you need a new virtual assistant because everyone you know has one (hi, FOMO). Or maybe you're in a panic and think hiring support ASAP will solve your problems, so you hire a bunch of people all at once and hope for the best.

While there's no denying the potential value associated with team building, random acts of hiring often lead to more trouble than they solve. Bring on the wrong people, and you'll waste time and money training them and correcting mistakes.

Whether you're hiring an employee, using a project-based freelancer, sourcing an agency, or bringing on a consultant, building a team is critical to growing and scaling your business. It's essential to get it right.

To hire the right people for the right roles at the right times, start by evaluating key business metrics. Here's how.

Start with easy money

This isn't about how much you can afford to pay someone, but rather how well you or your sales staff can close sales. If your close rates are below 50% for referrals and below 30% for cold

leads, you may want to consider hiring a sales consultant or sales associate to boost those numbers.

Business owners often think they need more marketing to solve their sales problems, but marketing with weak sales rates is always an expensive proposition. Increasing your close rate is an effective way to boost profits and get more money in the bank. Whether you opt for a dedicated salesperson or an expert coach, focus on increasing your close rate first and you'll easily be able to afford to hire more team members later.

Evaluate interest in your business and services

How do you know if people are interested in hiring you or using your services? They contact you. Ask yourself how many inquiries your website generates each month. If your website fails to convert 1–3% of web traffic into inquiries, start by hiring a copywriter who specializes in conversion rate optimization. Then, get an analytics professional who can collaborate with the copywriter to set up tests and further optimize the results.

Mind your cash flow and profit margins

If you have a steady stream of clients but struggle to pay your bills, it's wise to hire a financial professional to oversee your finances. A certified public accountant (CPA), financial advisor, or fractional chief financial officer (CFO) can help you get a grip on your

Whether you're hiring an employee, using a project-based freelancer, sourcing an agency, or bringing on a consultant, **building a team is critical to growing and scaling your business. It's essential to get it right.**



numbers and drive your business in a more sustainable direction.

Pay attention to those reviews

When negative reviews and poor customer service damage your business' reputation, consider hiring a project manager or consultant who specializes in managing teams and client relationships and fulfillment. Allow them to evaluate your team's performance and adjust processes as needed.

Make sure you're getting enough traffic.

If your website traffic is low, hire an analytics professional to audit and diagnose your website's performance

issues. They can guide you toward the best person to fix it, whether an SEO specialist, web designer, ads expert, or social media manager. With web traffic, there is no one-size-fits-all, so rely on a data expert to "look under the hood" and point you in the right direction.

So, the next time you think hiring is the answer, don't jump to find the first VA or social media manager just because it seems like the right solution. Instead, check your analytics and let the data guide you in identifying the best channel to increase profits and grow.

Once you start generating more income, you can start thinking about outsourcing those unappealing administrative tasks later—but until then, focus on your bottom line! ●

Christie Osborne is the owner of [Mountainside Media](#), a company that helps event industry professionals' brands develop scalable marketing strategies that bring in more inquiries and leads. Christie is a national educator with recent speaking engagements at NACE Experience, WIPA and the ABC Conference. Christie regularly shares industry insight in her Catersource column, as well as on [SpecialEvents.com](#), [Wed Altered](#), [Risingtide Society](#), [WeddingIQ](#) and NACE's industry blog.

The Special Event *Shines* In Anaheim

The biggest and best conference in the industry brings event and catering professionals from around the world together for three days of education, exhibits, and excitement

BY AMANDA NICKLAUS

The Special Event made its annual return this past May in Anaheim, California. May is a busy season for event planners, especially with weddings occurring at a record high (over 2.6 million anticipated, according to *The Knot*). Yet, an estimated 3,000 planners and caterers took the time to come learn from industry professionals, gather inspiration for events, and make connections with each other.

“What a great but also scary time to be in the event industry,” said Kathleen Stoehr, Director of Community and Content Strategy for Informa Connect, noting robust business but also supply chain and hiring issues at play. Regardless, planners learned that when we come together, share knowledge, and support each other, we can continue to create memorable events and do what we love.

Each year, we like to look back at conference highlights. But first, we'd like to thank every attendee for making TSE an engaging and enjoyable experience, and we want to express our appreciation for our speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors for not only making the event possible, but making it the best ever!



Attendees perused the bookstore, featuring books & booksignings from several speakers throughout the week

All photos courtesy of WASIO Photography unless otherwise noted.



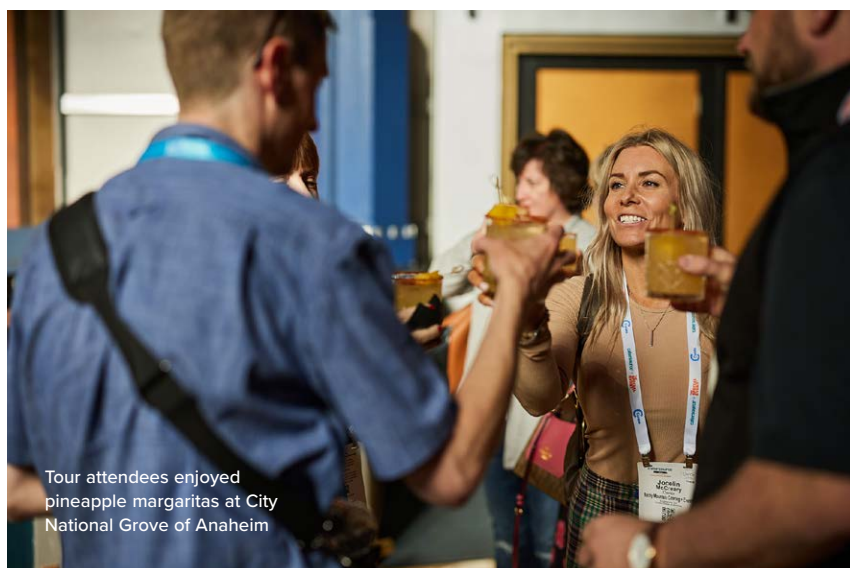
Tour attendees kicked off the week visiting LA venues, experiencing various theaters, lounges, and exhibit halls, all while building their networks.

Venues of Los Angeles

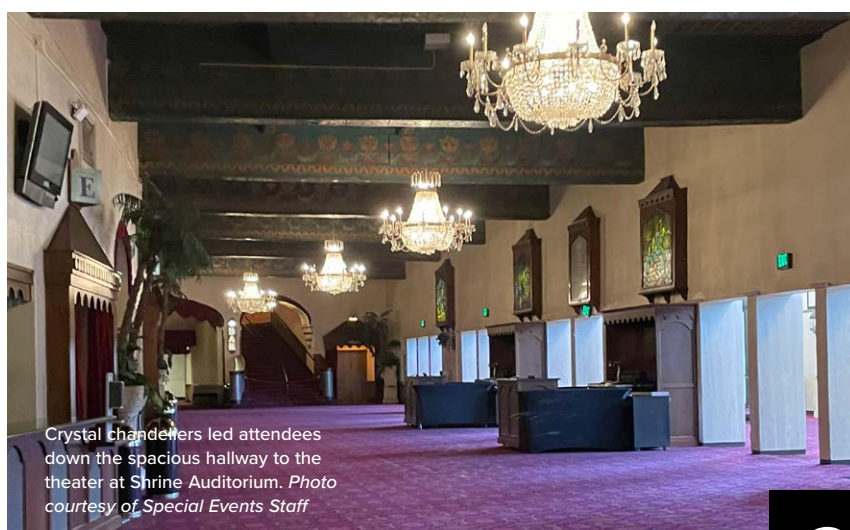
The week kicked off with a Venue and Culinary Tour, where attendees visited three major venues in the Los Angeles and Anaheim areas: Shrine Auditorium, SoFi Stadium, and City National Grove of Anaheim. Want to see more? Turn to page 80 to read about the tour.



Corona Beach House
at SoFi Stadium.
*Photo courtesy
Special Events Staff*



Tour attendees enjoyed
pineapple margaritas at City
National Grove of Anaheim



Crystal chandeliers led attendees
down the spacious hallway to the
theater at Shrine Auditorium. *Photo
courtesy of Special Events Staff*

Sessions to *Inspire*

Attendees gathered motivation from keynote speakers Christina Matteucci (Executive Director, David Beahm Experiences) and Roy Choi (founder/owner of Kogi Korean BBQ, and award-winning TV host). Both speakers emphasized collaboration and valuing each member of a team. “The worst possible thing we can do is exist in two separate silos,” Choi insisted, referencing front and back of house staff.



Opening Keynote Speaker **Christina Matteucci** captivated the audience with her speech *I Know You're the Boss, but...*

“We have to set each other up for success, and sometimes we need a safe space to argue it out. There can't be anymore ‘this is my domain, this is your domain.’ We're all together now and we need each other,” Choi added. Matteucci echoed the importance of each role in creating successful events. The lead of an event company isn't enough, she emphasized; “The best singers in the world need backup.”

Each day of the conference, guests attended sessions led by experts in every



(Above) Celebrity chef **Roy Choi** talked with **Kate Patay** during his Closing General Session. Choi is the founder of the modern food truck movement.



(Left) **Derek Woodruff** (Syndicate Sales) and **Liza Roeser** (FiftyFlowers) discussed sustainability and statement floral arrangements in their session *What's Trending in Floral Design?*



(Bottom Left) **CeCe Todd** was a crowd favorite with sessions, *Vetting Your Clients: Stop Wasting Time with Clients that Don't Fit*, and *A Candid Conversation with CeCe Todd*.



(Far Left) **Pauline Parry** during her book signing and session.



(Left) Event planner **Terrica** during her session *Planners Unite!* with **Jackie Watson**.



Robin Selden joined forces with **David Beahm** during their session *Luxury is a State of Mind*



Colja Dams and Claudia Koehler (VOK DAMS Worldwide) presenting *New Fundamentals for Events & Marketing*

aspect of the industry, including floral, catering, planning, business marketing, and more. Some notable sessions included *What's Trending in Floral Design* by Derek Woodruff (Syndicate Sales) and Liza Roeser (FiftyFlowers); *2022/2023 Global Wedding Trends* with Brian Green (By BrianGreen); *Staying Relevant as an Event Professional in a Fast-Paced World* by CeCe Todd (CeCe Todd Designs LLC); and *Luxury is a State of Mind* featuring colleagues and friends David Beahm and Robin Selden (David Beahm Experiences and Marcia Selden Catering & Events, respectively). Adrienne Harris (Adrienne Harris Designs) discussed bridal fashion trends in *It's the Year of the Bride*. Jackie Watson and Terrica talked community over competition in their joint Candid Conversation session *Planners Unite!* And always bringing surprises, David Merrell treated his guests to a sound bowl healing meditation in his session *David Merrell Presents: Designing Events in this New COVID Reality!*

Be a Part of Catersource + The Special Event 2023

Call for Speakers is now open for both Catersource Conference & Tradeshow and The Special Event, which will be co-located in Orlando, Fla. March 27–30, 2023. Go to thespecialeventshow.com for conference information or tse2023.catersource-cfp.com to pitch a session topic.

catersource + **THE SPECIAL EVENT**

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Exhibits for *Event Ideas*

Guests milled about the tradeshow floor, chatting with exhibitors, taking notes, and gathering inspiration for events. Furniture, lighting, installations, illuminated décor, and photo walls were just a few of the booths for attendees to admire throughout the week.





(Clockwise on spread)

- 1.** David Turco of Steelite International, with potential clients
- 2.** Showbots, from Brad Wilson Talent, ensure that guests are left with a lasting impression of the event.
- 3.** Supercool Creamery brought nitro-artisan ice cream to the tradeshow floor and to the Opening Night Party.
- 4.** FiftyFlowers displayed arches and the latest blooms.
- 5.** Quest Events brought the drama of draping to their exhibit hall booth.
- 6.** Illuminated Trees presented large light-up decoration on the tradeshow floor.



Leadership Lunch:

A celebration of emotional intelligence in the workplace

The 2022 Leadership Lunch celebrated three individuals—and one organization—that have made an impact on the catering and events industries. Emotional acceptance speeches touched on loved ones who supported careers, celebrated the spirit of volunteerism, and spoke to the resilience of an industry that banded together to get back to business. Wrapped around a theme of emotional intelligence, the event, chaired by Anthony Bolotta (Bolotta Entertainment) concluded with a program presented by Mike Lee and Carl Winston.

A three-course lunch prepared by the 24 Carrots Catering and Events team (and delivered to each table with its signature synchronized service), was themed appropriately with names befitting the event's theme.

(Clockwise, this page) **Lenny Talarico** received the Gala Lifetime Achievement Award from Donnell Bayot (in blue jacket).

Steve Kemble presented his annual award to the Live Events Coalition (LEC), in honor of their tireless political work to move the event industry forward. Accepting the award was LEC Executive Director, Nancy Shaffer (at mic).

Event chair **Anthony Bolotta** welcomed industry leaders.

Kelly Murphy accepted the Richard Carbotti Award, recognizing volunteerism.

Honoring Industry *Excellence*

The Annual ACE & Gala Awards

ceremony was held before the Opening Night Party at the Muckenthaler Cultural Center. During this gathering, event planners were honored for overcoming challenges and creating outstanding events from the past two years.

Categories such as Best Entertainment, Best Fundraising or Nonprofit Event, Best Wedding, and Total Décor were among those being recognized with a crystal trophy. One award winner, Wei Zhang with Beijing Chaoran Yingfeng Consulting Co., Ltd, video-chatted on stage all the way from China.



(Clockwise, this page)

Deborah Elias triumphantly accepts her Gala Award for her Halloween event A Spooktacular Night.

Kimberly Gora dazzled the stage as she accepted her Gala Award

Steve LeVine Entertainment and Public Relations was awarded Best Multiple Day Event Program. Shown: **Steve LeVine**

David Merrill poses proudly with the award won by AOO Events.

A friend of **Wei Zhang** video chatted Zhang in from China to deliver a speech after winning two awards.

A big round of applause goes to our **2022 Gala Award Winners!**

Their effort and dedication to their clients and the industry is inspiring and noteworthy. Thank you to everyone who entered, and congratulations to all!

Best Entertainment

Table 6 Productions, MC60 Merry Mary Bash

Best Event for a Private Individual: Budget \$1,000 and Above Per Guest

KG Consulting & Event Agency & Lenny Talarico Productions, Rosey's Birthday Bash

Best Event for a Private Individual: Budget Under \$1,000 Per Guest

Elias Events, A Spooktacular Night (see page 68 for more details)

Best Event Produced for a Corporation or Association

Haute, "Arabian Nights" 2020 Amway China Leadership Seminar and 25th Anniversary

Best Fundraising for Nonprofit

AOO Events, Rebel with a Cause

Best Multiple Day Event Program

Steve LeVine Entertainment and Public Relations, Pangaea's Jurassic Fight Night

Best Wedding

Beijing Chaoran Yingfeng Consulting Co., Ltd, TTKK.9 Love Radio

Total Décor

Beijing Chaoran Yingfeng Consulting Co., Ltd, Chun Jiang Hua Yue Ye (see page 10 for a feature on this event)

Watch [specialevents.com](https://www.specialevents.com) for in-depth features on each of the Gala Award winners!

Convivial Festivities

Each night, conference attendees experienced trendy events, where they immersed themselves in the latest in entertainment, décor, catering, and people-pleasing activities. The week opened with Connect Live, a welcoming California-themed night held at The RANCH Saloon. Guests were greeted by Old Hollywood-inspired servers and encountered eye-catching brand activations, including costumed living activations.

Event Chair: Tracy Bowles, Flawless Weddings & Events, LLC

The Opening Night Party at Muckenthaler Cultural Center, themed SoCality, wowed attendees with Southern California charm. Creative beverage stations, a paint-by-number mural, and a wandering guitarist contributed an energetic feel to the event. *Event Chairs: Rosemary Vera & Sarah Kulhberg, Colette's Catering & Events*

The Event Experience, held at the House of Blues Anaheim, had a touch of Star Wars theme in honor of May the Fourth (deemed Star Wars Day for the play on words, "May the fourth [force] be with you"). Champagne Creative Group and Cirque Berzerk lit up the venue in illuminated costumes. *Event Chairs: Dina Morales & Amy Sleeper, Haute*

The conference finished with the Closing Night Celebration at Marriott Anaheim, with a theme that led guests through the decades. From the Roaring '20s to the 2000s turn of the millennium, attendees experienced flappers, Pacman, an inflated bounce house, and silent disco. *Event Chair: Jeniffer Bello, JB Experiences*



(Clockwise on left)

1. Guests enjoyed California at Connect Live.
2. Many eye-catching activations created a photo-worthy Connect Live.
3. Attendees experienced a dose of living history with the "mermaid" who appeared throughout the week.
4. Colette's Catering provided fish and pork belly skewers for the Opening Night Party.
5. Attendees got a dose of other over-the-top activities at the Closing Night Celebration.



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- Party. Shown: Sebastien David of SENIK.
- 6.** Carizza Rose and Norm Bennett, 24 Carrots Catering & Events.
 - 7.** Attendees immersed themselves in activities and got to know the vendors at Opening Night Party.
 - 8.** Opening Night Party event chairs Rosemary Vera and Sarah Kuhlberg.
 - 9.** Musician Moses Lin charmed the crowd with his soothing finger-picking covers of classic hits at the Opening Night Party.

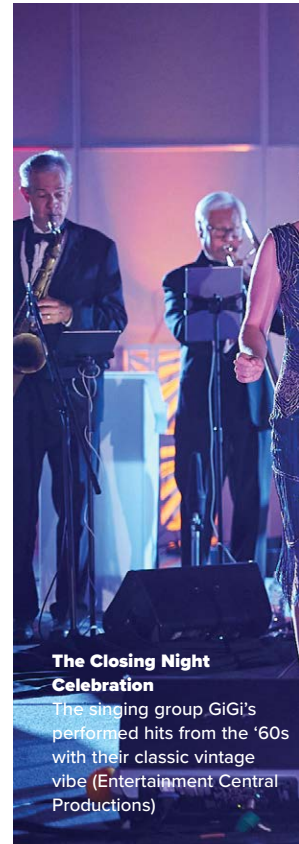


The Special Event Shines in Anaheim



The Event Experience

Illumination was the highlight of the night, with lights wrapped around servers, greeters, and entertainers alike.



The Closing Night Celebration

The singing group GiGi's performed hits from the '60s with their classic vintage vibe (Entertainment Central Productions)



The Event Experience

Attendees worked on a paint-by-number mural provided by Paintillio throughout the week.



The Event Experience

Interactive stations, like this multi-faceted mirror, kept attendees engaged and amused throughout the night.



The Closing Night Celebration

A mystery tattoo booth gave attendees surprise temporary ink.



The Closing Night Celebration

Attendees ended the week letting loose in a bounce house with new friends.

Culinary Trends

Whether in catering sessions, the Diced or Swizzle competitions, or evening events, attendees had the opportunity to experience a variety of culinary trends and techniques. Several sessions on grazing boards (2) explored the various ways to dress up a board—like plant-based, dessert boards, and brunch boards—and think outside the box in presentation, such as using a surfboard or wood pallet. Guests were treated to massive boards at Connect Live. Bite-sized servings were also popular, making eating an easier experience for guests at events, such as mini crème brûlée (5).

Revamped plant-based cuisine not only impressed guests with creativity but also acted as the center of conversation in several sessions about inclusivity in feeding guests. “Get

creative,” said BizDev director Stavros of Arizona’s M Culinary (7). “Don’t just throw veggies out there. Don’t just throw grains out there. Give something that has substance and weight.”

Between Roy Choi’s session and the Food Truck Roundup (3), attendees realized the extent that street food is trending. Food trucks are convenient for planners and caterers alike, and they help introduce guests to different cultural cuisines.

Nostalgia was the name of the game at several events, with food that took attendees through the decades. Adult versions of Capri Suns, as well as root beer floats, a pretzel wall, cocktail-flavored cotton candy, and build-your-own mini donuts let guests know that, with a bit of a twist, comfort food from the past is suitable for any occasion (1, 4, 6). ●





The Happiest Place on Earth

Registration will open soon for Catersource + The Special Event co-located conference in Orlando, Fla., March 27–30, 2023 at the Orange County Convention Center. Check thespecialeventshow.com for the latest on speakers, sessions, and events.



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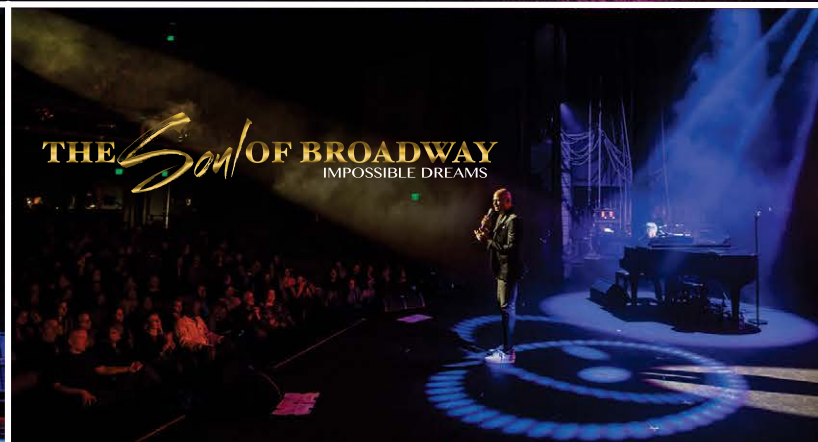
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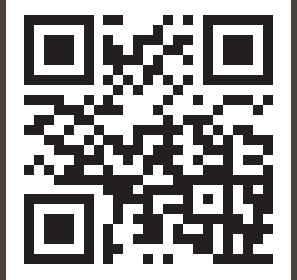
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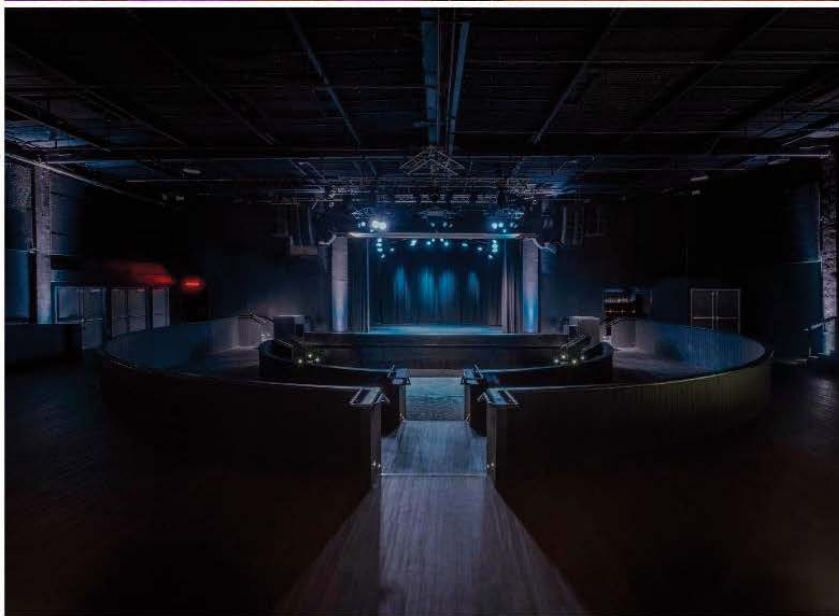
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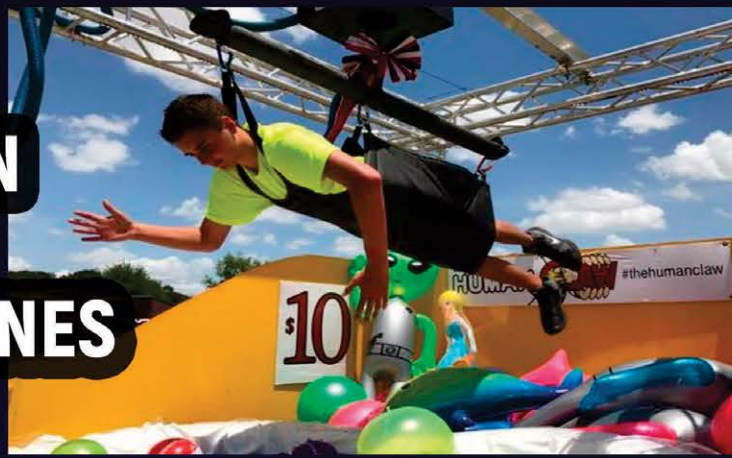
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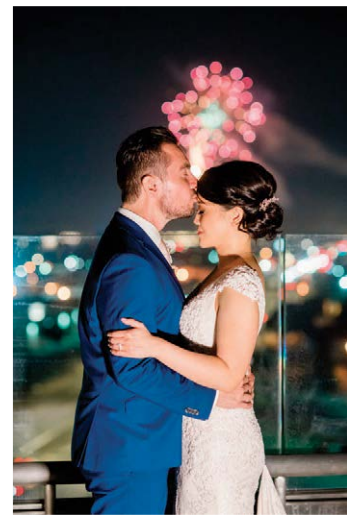
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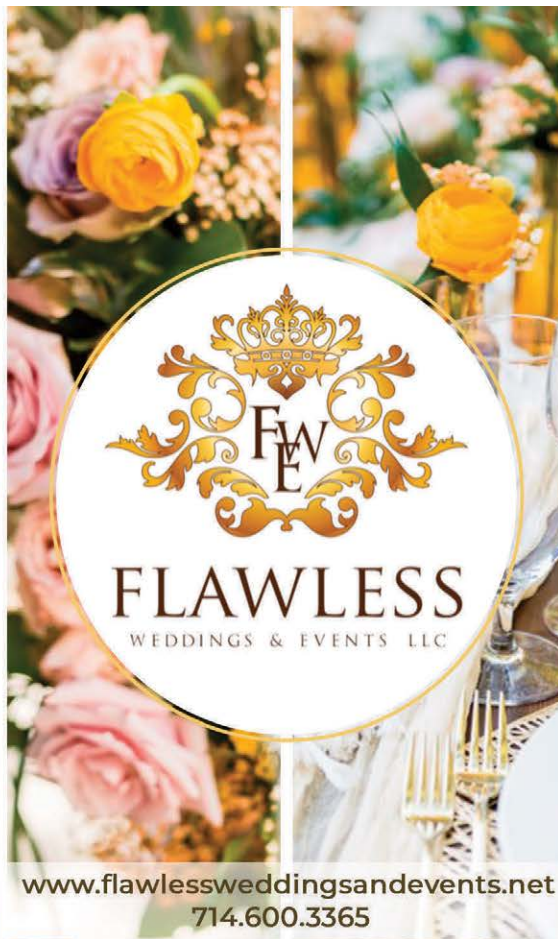
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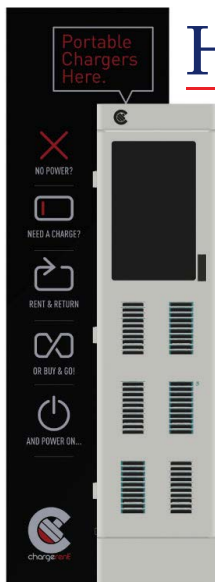
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ON TREND

The Special Event Trends Upward

Top Event & Industry Trends Seen During The Special Event 2022

By Amanda Nicklaus

Extravagant floral ceiling treatments are popular ways to transform an event space. Shown here: NOVA Kitchen & Bar in Anaheim
Photo courtesy Special Events Staff



Paint-by-number murals from Paintillio let attendees contribute their creativity. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



Geometric metallics bring Art Deco Style. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



A living fountain at the Closing Night Celebration. Photo courtesy Key Artist Group

“We’re really trying to create guest-centric experiences.” – Brian Green

This past May, caterers and event planners gathered for the annual Catersource + The Special Event conference in sunny Anaheim, California. All throughout the week, innovative trends could be seen in session topics, tradeshow booths, and evening events. Here are some of the top trends that you can integrate into your business to stand out to your clients.

FLORALS, FLORALS, FLORALS

There’s no doubt the pandemic has impacted the floral industry and its designs: with limited materials from supply chain issues, client preferences changing, and a deep desire for celebration, floral design is finding a new role in events.

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In their joint session *What's Trending in Floral Design?* Derek Woodruff, Brand Ambassador for Syndicate Sales, a floral hardgoods company, and Liza Roeser, CEO of FiftyFlowers, discussed the dichotomy of floral preferences these days: people want either simple, minimalist pieces or luxurious, extravagant arrangements, with no in-between.

Bridal bouquets and boutonnieres have gone back to basics. Arrangements are simpler, often deconstructed into multiple singular vases with one bud apiece instead of one large vase. Yet over-the-top statement pieces live on through sprawling tablescapes and massive arches, which can be reused for each stage of the event (and even broken down and used for multiple events).

The Pantone Color of the Year, Very Peri, has inspired hues of purples and blues. Bron Honsboro, owner of Bron the Flower Guy, spoke on the various ways to use periwinkle in his session *Floral Forecast: Looking Ahead at Industry Shifts and Trends*. "Trying to incorporate the Pantone Color of the Year, feeling obligated to do that in fresh floral, is not the goal," he says. "The goal is to be thoughtful, to be intentional, but not to inundate it."

Beside periwinkle, floral design is returning to bright pops of color. Woodruff says this is because "we've had five to seven blasé years of blush, nudes, and neutrals. [There is] oversaturation in the industry, which is really bringing a draw back to some color."

And at each stage of floral design, cutting down on waste is key. Reusable bouquet egg cages (along with sphagnum moss and aqua tubes) are great foam-free mechanics. Reuse transportation materials and even broken flowers for corsages. Think about how you can make the best use of product at each level of planning.

DAZZLING DÉCOR

With post-pandemic budgets and desire to celebrate, event spaces are undergoing total, elaborate transformation.

Living activations bring décor to life, with costumed actors and servers setting the scene. Keeping servers, greeters, and entertainers themed and mingling with guests keeps any space lively. At the Closing Night Celebration, there was even a living fountain, with costumed and made-up actors posing together in a pool with tubes of streaming water, fascinating guests all night.

Floor-to-ceiling detail is more important than ever. Art Deco is here to stay, with its geometric, linear designs, metallics, and bold statement mirrors. Ceiling treatments with elaborate, dripping florals help transform the room and set the stage. Illuminated scenery, like balloons and trees, draw eyes across the venue. Custom-wrapped dance floors bring a personal touch to the event. Pay attention to design details at every corner.

In his 2022/2023 *Global Wedding Trends* session, event planner Brian Green said, "We're really trying to create guest-centric experiences." Immersive activities from 360-degree selfie stations to paint-by-number murals to mystery print-

on tattoos allow guests to move across different stations and interact with each other (or take a social break). Make sure your event space has entertainment, activities, and décor that totally immerse guests.

SUSTAINABILITY & ALL IT ENTAILS

Sustainability refers to more than just the environment: as a whole, all business practices should contribute to long-term healthful outcomes.



Metallic furniture combines Art Deco and residential comfort trends. Photo courtesy Special Events Staff

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion is one sustainable practice to incorporate. In her session *DE&I: What's F&B Have to Do With It?* Tracy Stuckrath, founder of thrive! meetings & events, emphasized the importance of feeding everybody in an equitable way, considering allergies, religion, and physical diversity.

The inclusive mindset is important for your business to stay relevant. During the session *Fresh or Stale: Ensure Sourcing is Innovative and Inclusive*, Dr. Aurora Benton (Astrapto LLC) and Zoe Moore (Moore Consulting Agency) encouraged attendees to get creative with unusual partnerships and sourcing, and to integrate diversity into processes, policies, and training. Communication is the key to sustainable relationships.

Environmental sustainability depends not only on your choices but on the practices of your suppliers. "We are



A sprawling floral tablecape at Opening Night Party. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



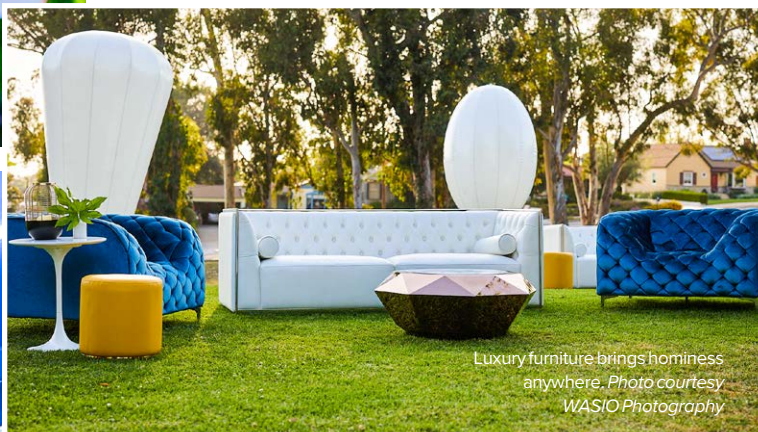
A floral statement arch on the tradeshow floor. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography

so slow to adapt,” said Roeser (*What’s Trending in Floral Design?*). “Interview your supplier with smart questions.” Make sure your suppliers know where their products come from. Your environmental impact is tied to the impact of all your partners and suppliers.

FEELS LIKE HOME

If the pandemic taught us anything, it’s that space impacts our moods and should be comfortable and inviting. Homey luxury furniture is hugely popular in event spaces, with eye-catching lounge furniture and ambient lighting. As Green stated in 2022/2023 *Global Wedding Trends*, people prefer “residential vibes,” where conversation is fostered through intimate and comfortable seating layouts.

Part of a home environment is a personal touch. Clients don’t want what everyone else has nearly as much as they want customized, personal décor and activities. Let your clients express themselves through the design. This doesn’t have to be through extravagance, either; minimalism allows the residential furnishing to create a customized, individual feel.



Luxury furniture brings hominess anywhere. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography

TECHNOLOGY FOR EVERY ASPECT OF EVENTS

Technology has found its place in every aspect of the event industry. In her session *Making it Wow: Technology Trends*, Deborah Elias of Elias Events shared a number of apps and rental features that can elevate any event.

There are apps for streamlining mundane business tasks and other apps that help planners go paperless. The Pantone app allows users to take photos and create color schemes for designers. Use apps to streamline processes, making each step of event planning easier and freeing you up to be more creative.

In an era of instant gratification, 3D visualization platforms create simulations of a venue. Choose from color palettes, furniture rentals, tenting, florals, lighting, and more.

Live event technology is more innovative than ever: with portable WiFi, edible 2D and 3D printing for customizable latte or cocktail art, or QR scavenger hunts, guests can stay connected and engaged in exciting new ways. ●

CONFETTI

A Spooktacular Night

Creative décor, interactive food and beverage, and clear communication were the keys to a successful Halloween celebration planned on a tight deadline.

By Amanda Nicklaus

All photos courtesy of Morris Malakoff Photography



Witch hats hung from the ceiling, drawing eyes to every inch of the home.



Skeletons and tombstones line the pool area.

ar ht

WHEN ELIAS EVENTS was approached by a client wanting to throw an over-the-top Halloween bash with a two-week deadline, they didn't balk at the thought. Instead, they judged their assets, came up with a plan, and assembled a stunning party that left guests with engaging memories. Thanks to insightful planning, the event came together quickly: from the get-go, Elias Events implemented constant communication and a precise schedule to ensure no detail went unnoticed. With a plethora of lights, flowers, candles, and creative spooky theme décor, they were able to execute a quickly-planned party without compromising integrity and brought the client's vision to reality.

With the pandemic at a lull, people were ready to celebrate, but vendors were difficult to find. Nonetheless, Elias Events managed to pull off an extravagant spooky event, mostly due to creative choices that impressed guests and engaged them in every aspect of the night.

Some of the highlights included a massive lit "BOO" sign upon entrance, witches' hats hanging



A zombie and witch greeted guests with a signature champagne cocktail.

from the ceiling, a skeleton charcuterie board, a taco bar in a coffin, a fortune teller, and a "mad scientist laboratory" where guests could get alcoholic "shots of courage" or a "blood infusion." Relying on creativity also allowed Elias Events to make the party feel lavish while sticking to their budget. The interactive entertainment, creative food and beverage, and innovative decoration came together to make an event that was vivid and memorable for all. ●

The effort paid off, too: Elias Events was named 2022 Gala Award Winner for Best Event for a Private Individual: Budget Under \$1,000 per Guest.

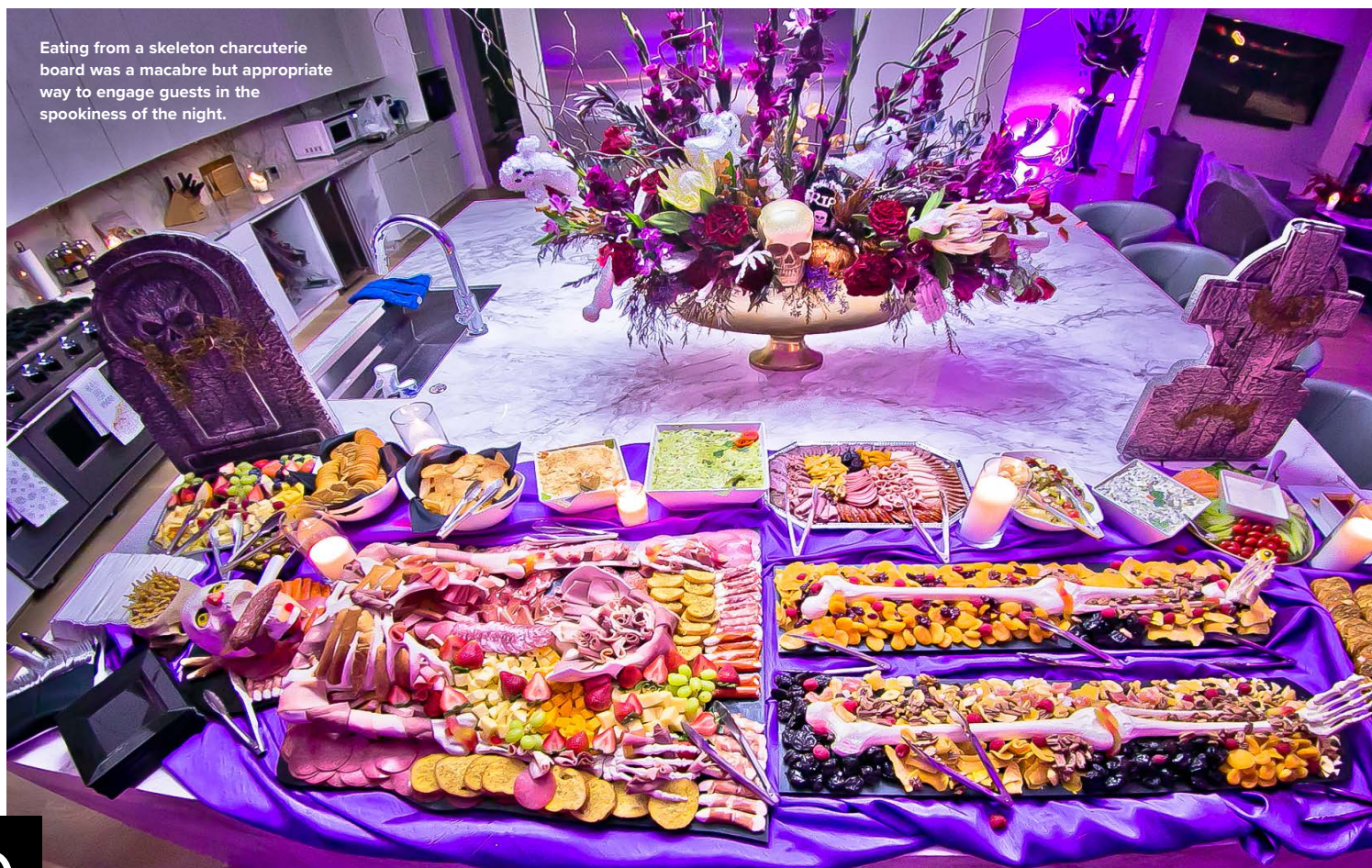
A Spooktacular Night



An archway of balloons and a giant lit sign welcomed guests into the house, which was lit up entirely in purple.



Sparkly black and purple candied apples continued the night's color scheme.



Eating from a skeleton charcuterie board was a macabre but appropriate way to engage guests in the spookiness of the night.



Cobwebs, candles, and flowers of vivid oranges and reds set the tone of the event.



Gala Submissions Now Being Accepted

It's once again time to celebrate the best of the best! Nominations are now being accepted for the 2023 Special Events Gala Awards. We invite you to submit your best work from the past year. Join in the excitement and the spirit of our industry as we celebrate the hard work and exceptional accomplishments of our peers. Eligible events must have occurred between January 01, 2022 and November 30, 2022.

To submit an entry to this year's Gala Awards, please visit our awards portal at <https://ace-gala.awardsplatform.com>.



FOOD FOR FÊTES

HONEY STRAWBERRY
LEMONADE POPSICLES.
PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL
HONEY BOARD

Ice Ice Baby

by **Amber Kispert**

NOW THAT IT'S SUMMER, events will be heading outdoors for some much needed fun in the sun. However, as the temperatures rise, your guests may be in search of some refreshing frozen treats to help keep them cool.

Don't be fooled, however, "cool treats" are so much more than traditional ice cream cones.

MANCHEGO ICE CREAM FROM CHEF JENN SHEPPARD (CUISINE SOLUTIONS). MANCHEGO CHEESE IS THE STAR INGREDIENT IN THIS BEAUTIFUL AND INNOVATIVE ICE CREAM RECIPE. THE ICE CREAM IS MADE WITH CALIFORNIA MILK AND HEAVY CREAM AND SERVED OVER ROASTED PEARS TOPPED WITH FRESHLY GRATED HAZELNUTS. PHOTO COURTESY CALIFORNIA MILK ADVISORY BOARD



HONEY AND ALMOND BUTTER ICE CREAM. PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL HONEY BOARD



SWEET

Let's start with the obvious: outdoor events are prime territory for frozen treats. Whether it's popsicles, sorbet, or ice cream cones, these sweet treats can help beat the heat. However, frozen or chilled fruits can also offer a healthier alternative (think frozen grapes, watermelon, and paletas).

BLACK GRAPE SORBET. PHOTO COURTESY CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION



FROZEN GRAPES IN AN ICE CREAM CONE. PHOTO COURTESY CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION



FOOD FOR FÊTES



**CHILLED MANGO-CARAMELIZED
ONION SOUP WITH SHRIMP.**
PHOTO COURTESY NATIONAL
ONION ASSOCIATION



**SWEET MEETS SAVORY: GREEN
GRAPE GAZPACHO SHOOTERS.**
PHOTO COURTESY CALIFORNIA
TABLE GRAPE COMMISSION

SAVORY

Cool treats aren't solely reserved for sweets though, there are plenty of savory options that are perfect for a hot summer day. A great savory option for outdoor events is chilled soups, such as gazpachos. Chilled soups can also make great hors d'oeuvres by being served in shot glasses, martini glasses or in tasting spoons.

WHO SAYS COLD TREATS MUST ALL BE SWEET? HERE IS A **CHILLED CALIFORNIA AVOCADO CUCUMBER SOUP**. PHOTO COURTESY CALIFORNIA AVOCADO COMMISSION





FROZEN GRAPE DAIQUIRIS.
PHOTO COURTESY
CALIFORNIA TABLE GRAPE
COMMISSION



**HONEY WATERMELON
GRANITA WITH
HONEYCOMB.** PHOTO
COURTESY NATIONAL
HONEY BOARD

SIP

Alright, you have the food covered, so how do you help quench the thirst of your guests? Through frozen, refreshing cocktails of course! Margaritas, daquiris, Frappuccinos, slushies, shakes; there really isn't a shortage of summertime beverages to keep things cool.



TONI ROBERTS, AWARD-WINNING EXECUTIVE PASTRY CHEF AT STATE AND LAKE CHICAGO TAVERN AT THE WIT HOTEL MAKES **CUCUMBER MOJITO FRO-YO POPS** WITH FRESH CUCUMBER, **THE PERFECT PURÉE KEY LIME CONCENTRATE**, MINT, AND OPTIONAL DARK RUM. SHE ALSO MAKES **SWEET AND SPICY SALTED TAMARIND MARGARITA POPS** WITH THE PERFECT PURÉE TAMARIND, FRESH LIME, ALEPPO PEPPER AND TEQUILA. PHOTO COURTESY THE PERFECT PURÉE



**HONEY PEACH
FRAPPUCCINO.** PHOTO
COURTESY NATIONAL
HONEY BOARD

Keep Your COOL

As much fun as cool treats are for outdoor events, they also require forethought for safe serving.

One of the most important aspects of safe food service is to keep it out of the “danger zone.” This refers to the temperature range in which bacteria growth occurs most rapidly on food. According to [ServSafe](#) recommendations, food temperatures between 41- and 135-degrees F represent this danger zone. ServSafe states that four hours is the maximum length of time ready-to-eat foods can stay in the temperature danger zone.

Here are some thoughts on keeping food at that icy temperature that guests love:

- **Ice is your best friend.** Pack your frozen treats in ice to ensure they stay deliciously cold for the length of serve time.
- **Pack items in coolers.** Transport boxes and chillers (such as Cambro’s Cam GoBoxes

and Camchiller) are designed to extend the holding time of your food without the mess of melting ice. These cold containers can keep food chilled for hours. Plastic or metal coolers recommended.

Bonus tip: When using a cooler, wrapping it in aluminum foil is often suggested. The aluminum foil acts as a barrier to the outside weather.

- If you have access to electricity, consider renting or investing in refrigeration equipment.
- Bring in a food truck or ice cream truck that already has the equipment in place to keep items cold.
- Sun is not your friend in this instance. During your site visit, observe where shade lands during the event, if any, and place your serving areas accordingly. If not, consider tenting or large umbrellas to keep food out of direct sunlight.

By having the essential equipment for keeping food cold, it ensures the food will have the maximum amount of safety and flavor.



BRING AN OLD-FASHIONED ICE CREAM CART TO YOUR NEXT EVENT SO GUESTS CAN HELP THEMSELVES TO GOURMET POPS WITH UNIQUE FLAVOR COMBINATIONS AND FRESH, HIGH-QUALITY INGREDIENTS. THE EASY PREP AND SERVE OF THESE GOURMET POPS MAKES THEM ALL THE MORE FUN! PHOTO COURTESY THE PERFECT PURÉE

BOLD CATERING & DESIGN HAS AN INTERACTIVE SMASHED BAKED ALASKA STATION WHERE GUESTS WATCH AS AN ICE CREAM COOKIE SANDWICH IS DIPPED IN LIQUID NITROGEN AND SMASHED WITH A WOODEN Mallet. ONCE PLATED, IT'S TOPPED WITH MERINGUE AND TORCHED—BEFORE BEING HANDED BACK TO THE GUEST TO ADD THEIR TOPPINGS OF CHOICE. PHOTO COURTESY BOLD CATERING & DESIGN



A REFRESHING **DRINK POUCH** FROM G CATERING. PHOTO COURTESY G CATERING



THIS POOL PARTY STATION FROM PINCH FOOD DESIGN IS KEPT AT THE PERFECT TEMPERATURE IN A SOUS-VIDE BATH. PICTURED IS **MUSHROOM RISOTTO** WHERE GUESTS CAN GRAB THEIR JAR AND SHAKE TO EMULSIFY. PHOTO COURTESY PINCH FOOD DESIGN

SHOWCASE

Frozen or chilled items can also offer opportunities for a bit of showmanship in the form of nitrogen-cooking, ice cream trucks or coolers, Thai-rolled ice cream, and blender action.

Try out these creative ideas for a truly chill summer event. ●



BOOZY POPSICLES, SUCH AS THESE FROM VICTORIA LARTEY-WILLIAMS (VICTORIOUS EVENTS NYC) IN CUSTOM FLAVORS ARE AN AMAZING TREAT FOR OUTDOOR EVENTS. THEY CAN BE SERVED IN WINE GLASSES TO KEEP IT CHIC AND NEAT AND THEN TOPPED OFF WITH YOUR FAVORITE LIBATION FOR AN EXTRA KICK. PHOTO COURTESY J&R PHOTOGRAPHY



THAILAND STIR-FRIED ICE CREAM ROLLS AT FREEZE PAN.

Why & How to Perform a Tech Audit



Just like your computer needs regular updates, your business needs its own technological tune-up occasionally.

By Nora Sheils

If you are not a technological guru, the term “audit” can feel intimidating. But if you’re hoping to improve your client experience and boost growth, looking at the technology you use is essential. These systems and tools allow us to streamline communication, processes, and workflows.

Though incredibly helpful, technology evolves at a rapid rate. If we don’t keep up, we are stuck using outdated programs and apps that impact our productivity and overall reputation. Just like your computer needs regular updates, your business needs its own technological tune-up occasionally.

As most event professionals are still dealing with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, having reliable digital systems in place is more important than ever. With most businesses still working from home, falling behind in terms of technology is no longer an option for those looking to keep up with the latest trends.

If you are new to tech audits, there’s no need to panic. Instead, follow these steps to assess your current methods and how you can use your technology to stand out against the noise.

START FROM THE BEGINNING

When you take an overarching look into your tech landscape, you might feel overwhelmed. That’s why it is best to start at the beginning and work your way through each process. For example, think about the systems you use when a

potential client reaches out, all the way to when you offboard them.

Make a note of the tools you use to complete each task and which ones allow you to stay organized. Next, review each of your workflows and pay close attention to the programs you feel you can’t live without and those that slow you down. Finally, create a list of ideal solutions that would allow you to save time and take on additional clients.

KEEP YOUR CLIENTS IN MIND

Providing a high-quality client experience is at the top of all event professionals’ to-do lists. These days, with our phones in our pockets and our devices connected to one another, it’s impossible to do so without using the right tech systems. Many clients are accustomed to doing things virtually—from onboarding to follow-up calls to regular meetings.

This is why you need to keep your clients top of mind as you conduct your tech audit. For example, if your audience is full of Gen X-ers, they may prefer to communicate through email or phone calls. Whereas if you are continuously working with Millennials, you might want to look at systems that include texting or instant messaging channels. It’s all about finding the intersection between your needs and your clients’ needs. Think about what your audience values most and how you can implement tech updates they’ll appreciate.



MOVE ONE PIECE AT A TIME

You have looked at your systems, and it turns out you need a new client management, invoicing, and email marketing platform. That's enough to make even the savviest of tech professionals' heads spin! Before you dive in and feel as though everything needs immediate attention, focus on one area at a time.

Ask yourself which tech updates will allow you to bring in additional business. What causes you the biggest headaches? Which program needs immediate attention, and which can wait? Don't feel you have to enact significant changes overnight. Instead, develop a timeline to help outline which systems you'll replace and when.

And before jumping into any new programs, be sure to pay close attention to reviews and recommendations. Past and current users will provide you with an unfiltered opinion that will be instrumental in helping you choose a

system that will work for your business.

Virtual solutions have become a game-changer for event professionals looking to support collaboration with clients, colleagues, and employees. Conducting a tech audit will help you stay on top of the latest tech solutions, so you can emerge as a leader in today's ever-changing market. ●

Nora Sheils is the co-founder of [Rock Paper Coin](#), the first software platform to bring together wedding planners, couples, and vendors into one system for managing and paying contracts and invoices. She is also the founder and lead wedding planner of award-winning firm [Bridal Bliss](#). In addition to recognition by *Portland Business Journal* in its 40 Under 40 series, she also earned a spot in *The BizBash 500* for 2021.

AS SEEN IN *Los Angeles*

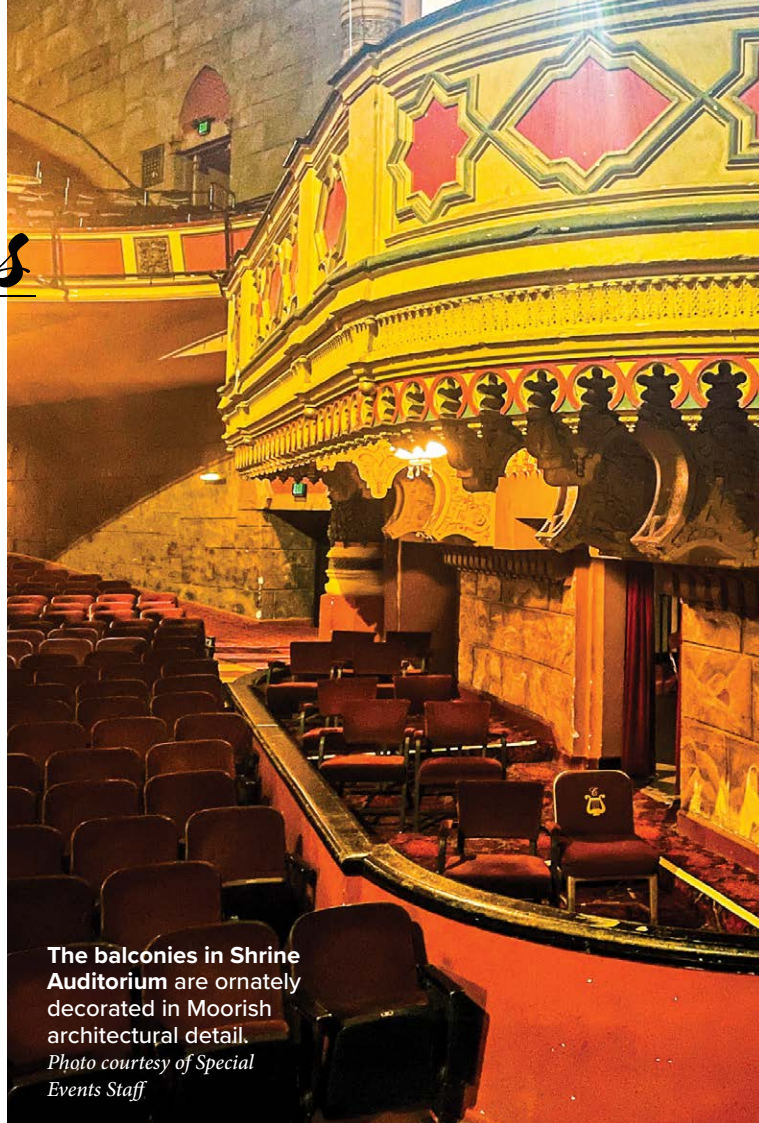
ON MAY 2, three coach buses filled with event planners and caterers toured around Los Angeles and Anaheim to view some of the most iconic venues in the area. There were three must-see stops: Shrine Auditorium, SoFi Stadium, and City National Grove of Anaheim. Each of these venues shines in their own unique way, from hosting award shows, to renting out exclusive club rooms, to catering toward each audience type that comes through the doors. Here are the highlights of what we saw.

SHRINE AUDITORIUM

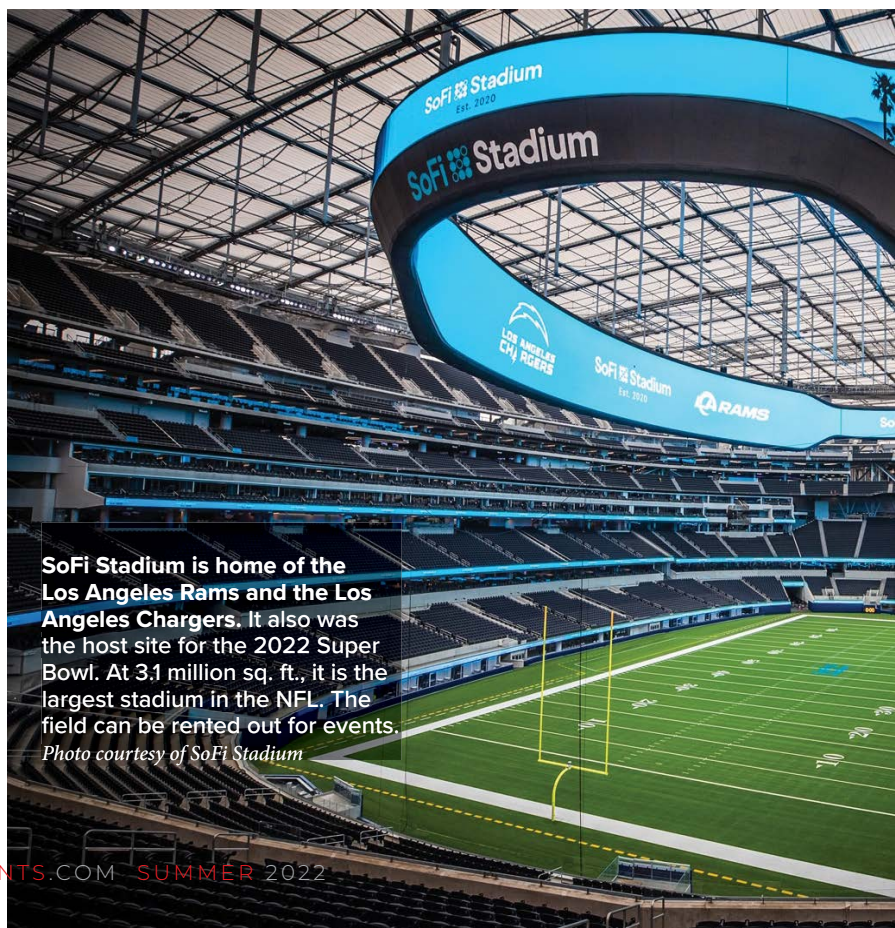
Between the spacious promenade, legendary auditorium, historic expo hall, and cobblestone and palm-lined Royal Street, Shrine Auditorium offers a variety of areas for events to thrive. Originally built in 1906 (and rebuilt after a fire in 1926), the Shrine has been featured in several renowned films, including *King Kong* and both versions of *A Star is Born*. The auditorium also has hosted several award shows—the Oscars and Grammys for example—and many rock concerts. The 10,000 sq. ft. stage adjusts to create more seating as necessary, accommodating up to 6,300 people. The 54,000 sq. ft. Expo Hall can be divided into several parts and is used for anything from banquets to after parties. And right outside, the cobblestone street gets blocked off for red carpets and outdoor seating. Catering is provided by Wolfgang Puck Catering, and the kitchen can be built out in the outdoor area to expand catering abilities. Whether you're planning a small meeting or a massive celebration, Shrine Auditorium is an excellent venue option.

SOFI STADIUM

Home field for the LA Chargers and the LA Rams, SoFi Stadium is so much more than a football field. There are 35 rentable rooms, including terrace and patio suites, and if you're really going for the wow-factor in your event,



The balconies in Shrine Auditorium are ornately decorated in Moorish architectural detail.
Photo courtesy of Special Events Staff



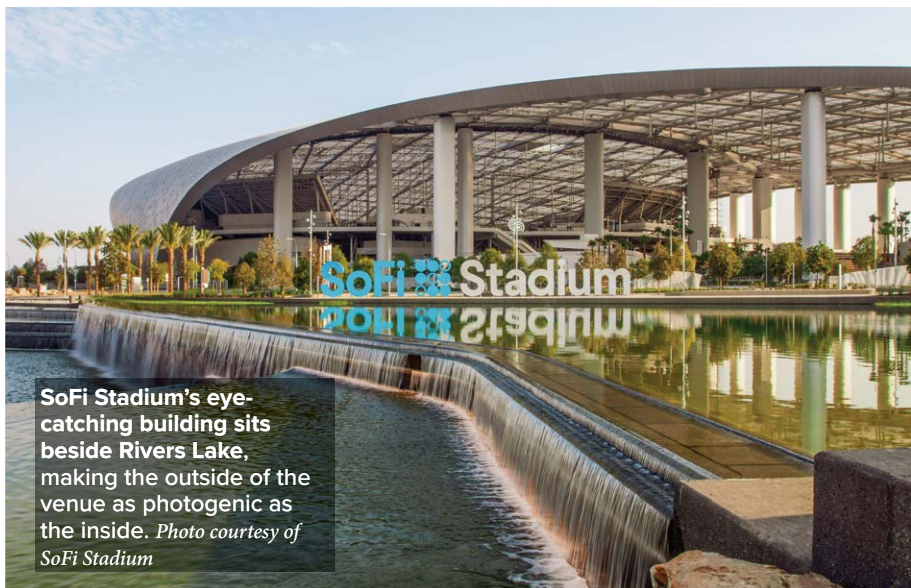
SoFi Stadium is home of the Los Angeles Rams and the Los Angeles Chargers. It also was the host site for the 2022 Super Bowl. At 3.1 million sq. ft., it is the largest stadium in the NFL. The field can be rented out for events.
Photo courtesy of SoFi Stadium



Lobby and hallway at the Shrine Auditorium glow with ornate chandeliers, Moorish architectural design, and vibrant carpeting. Photo courtesy of Special Events Staff



Between each level of Shrine Auditorium 6,300 people can be seated. With four opera boxes, 3,256 balcony seats, and 3,044 floor seats, the room is versatile enough to accommodate a variety of events. Photo courtesy of Special Events Staff



SoFi Stadium's eye-catching building sits beside Rivers Lake, making the outside of the venue as photogenic as the inside. Photo courtesy of SoFi Stadium



SoFi's Corona Beach House features a bar, seating, and this lit-up Corona décor. Photo courtesy of Special Events Staff



(Above) The lobby of City National Grove greets guests with vibrant artwork behind the main bar. During the Venue & Culinary Tour, guests were offered pineapple margaritas.

Photo courtesy of WASIO Photography

you can even rent out the field itself. Each of the patio suites, like the Toyota Patio, is themed for a different part of California, using plants and décor that highlight the natural ecology of that area. With the variety of spaces available, SoFi Stadium is great for small cocktail parties or major celebrations—in fact, rapper Drake rented out the entire stadium to celebrate his Artist of the Decade Award.

CITY NATIONAL GROVE OF ANAHEIM

Walking into the roomy lobby of City National Grove, your eyes will be greeted by a bold pop of orange and gold artwork behind a black granite bar top. The venue accommodates up to 4,000 people, with themed spaces like the landscaped Palm Terrace courtyard and art-deco Hollywood-inspired Gallery. Then there is the theater area itself, which holds 1,800 people in standing general admission style. A thoughtful bonus? Chef Thomas Ramirez caters toward each event that is held, researching and creating Korean food for a K-pop concert, for instance, or wiping down the entire kitchen for a crowd with gluten-free members. Between the artistic space and personalization of the menu, City National Grove is a venue to look into for your next LA event. ●

— Amanda Nicklaus



Attendees were all smiles as they made the last stop of the tour at City National Grove.



(Above top) Walking into the City National Grove of Anaheim, guests are met with a welcoming customized marquee and massive posters announcing upcoming events. The venue, built in 1998, has undergone multiple name and ownership changes, taking on its current name in 2011. *Photo courtesy of WASIO Photography*

(Left) The City National Bank Crystal Lounge features a sleek wood-paneled bar, a television, and several seating areas, like these comfortable chairs placed in front of a mirror and floral pieces. *Photo courtesy of Special Events Magazine*

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Wellness Check for Spaces & Places

By Suzanne Morrell



Years ago, I first felt the spark to pursue a path in planning events sustainably after working at a conference where I witnessed a hotel banquet staff replenishing an entire buffet...shortly before systematically trashing every item. I was horrified by the unnecessary waste. That day it became my mission to ensure I included sustainable event frameworks in my planning process.

Attention to the sustainable approach has grown exponentially since that time. Along with it, the well-being of people in the environment has also moved measurably closer to center

stage. Expectations are different now. Thanks to evidenced-based frameworks, we now have a greater understanding of how to create spaces that consider the relationships between physical environments and human health.

Backed by science, the framework is a people-first design. Making sure we have healthy air, mindful acoustics, natural lighting, and fresh drinking water is essential to health and well-being in indoor spaces where, according to the EPA, we spend roughly 90% of our lives.

As stated in a recent Deloitte paper, *Well-being: A New Cornerstone for ESG Strategy and Reporting*, “what once was a ‘nice to have’ is now a ‘must have.’” To ignore wellness components is to invite potential financial risk, negative PR, or worse.

Traditionally, the focus on health and well-being of people in buildings is aimed at the workplace or home environments because we spend more time in those spaces. However, any space inside, regardless of the amount of time we spend in it—including our event spaces—should consider the same standards. There are manifold ways we can approach incorporating a focus on wellness into our events. Here are a few health-first considerations for planning your next event:

- 1. Air:** Is this a smoke-free facility? How often is the ventilation tested and balanced?
- 2. Water:** Is fresh drinking water provided to event attendees and staff? How accessible is that water to

where people are located?

- 3. Sensory:** Observe how much natural light is available. Is natural lighting incorporated in the event design? Is the space free from exterior noise and distractions? Have you included restorative places in your event space to allow for privacy, dimmable lights and calming colors? Have you addressed olfactory issues by eliminating potent or potentially offending odors?
- 4. Movement:** Does your design encourage attendees to walk around and be physically active?
- 5. Nourishment:** Are there plentiful healthy food options available and a reduced number of processed foods?
- 6. Accessibility:** Is the space, including back-of-house, designed to support individuals of all abilities?

On a personal note, I now have first-hand appreciation for all these considerations, especially the final one. A traumatic brain injury and subsequent extended recovery I experienced this year brought my focus on wellness front and center, every day of my life. As a result, the challenge has also served to further elevate my awareness of the essential role wellness plays in the lives of people entering our event spaces. Investing in and nurturing a culture of well-being makes good business sense now and for the future.

So, give your next event space a check-up by using a wellness checklist throughout your process. A health-centric event generates peace-of-mind for attendees—and planners. ●

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Part 1 in our sustainable seafood series: what is sustainable seafood and how to source



Behind the Cover

Pinch Food Design, a top catering company based out of New York City, presents remarkable works of edible art to their clients, and they create culinary experiences as imaginative as they are practical. During Catersource + The Special Event, Founding Partner Stella Rankin gave an insider's look at how Pinch is able to impress, entertain, and inspire guests with food during her session *Memorable Experiences Through Re-Imagined Catering*. Pictured on the cover is Pinch's twice roasted eggplant (dairy free and vegan) featuring sociable garlic tahini, rainbow tomatoes, olive oil crumbs, and cashew feta. *Photo courtesy Pinch Food Design*

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Joanne Purnell puts a spotlight on when caterers collaborate



My gold stars

As Harvey Mckay wrote in his, *Dig Your Well Before You're Thirsty*, the single most common characteristic shared by truly successful people is “the ability to create and nurture a network of contacts.”

I absolutely agree. The generous, intelligent people I have met since joining the catering and events industry eight years ago have been my professional lifeline. Literally, my

ever-growing contacts list has helped me land incredible speakers, build robust content pillars, and explore opportunities I never would have believed possible.

You may or may not know this, but I am painfully introverted. Communicating via the written word has been my saving (career) grace and my way of connecting. I embrace one-on-one conversations but tend to freeze up in groups. So, if you are anything like me, or feel stalled in your attempts, how do you get past this to truly build a list of people you can call on, rely upon, maybe even ask a favor of?

Here is the #1 tip I employed at Catersource + The Special Event in Anaheim: I said yes to everything I could. Yes, I will.

I'll admit that I do not have a lot of time for networking while running a conference, and I'm tired at the end of the show day. There was an evening that I went back to my room and thought, “I can't work anymore. I'm staying in, recharging, and ordering room service.”

But then I chided myself: “How does that serve me in my career—especially when I am in the midst of the largest gathering of industry professionals in the U.S.?”

You guessed it. I gave myself 30 minutes of grace and then headed out again.

Saying yes to professional development through networking, especially when you are investing in a conference and tradeshow spend, is the best ROI bang for your buck.

So, say yes to the dinner or drink invitation. Say yes—I will approach that speaker with my question after their session. Yes, I will talk to that person sitting next to me on the bus to or from the event. Yes, I will join that industry association; yes, I will attend the SEARCH Foundation event.

I want to thank everyone who presented sessions at Catersource + The Special Event, to those people who volunteered on our event committees and chaired our events, and to Norm Bennett and Pawntra Shadab, our 2022 Ambassadors who, through their own contacts, were able to connect us with others. I feel like I've added a few more gold networking stars to my list of those I can rely upon, and wow—does that ever feel good.

Kathleen Stoehr
Director of Community & Content Strategy

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Summer 2022 CONTRIBUTORS



Executive **Anthony Lambatos** talks how to set a team up to thrive.



Sales expert **Meryl Snow** discusses how to conduct an effective sales meeting.



Good Gracious! Events' President **Joanne Purnell** reflects on the benefits of collaboration.

What do you think of this issue? Like it? Love it? Have something to contribute to our website? We'd love to hear from you. Write us at editor@cattersource.com.

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by Kathleen Stoebr



Conference updates

CS+TSE Wraps 2022 Show, Looks Toward 2023

Throughout this issue, you will be able to enjoy highlights and ideas from Catersource + The Special Event 2022, which was recently held at the Anaheim Convention Center in May. We put on a great show, and were thrilled to see so many of you, despite how busy the industry currently seems to be.

But here at Catersource we are already looking toward 2023, when we are back in the first quarter of the year and ready to surprise and delight everyone who attends our conference and tradeshow.

Catersource 2023

We'll be heading to sunny Florida March 27–30, 2023 and the Orange County Convention Center (OCCC), a short 10-mile, 15-minute drive from the Orlando airport and with easy walkability to area hotels, restaurants, and entertainment options. As you read this, we at Catersource will have just returned from a site visit—with that, we will be ready to start planning your immersive experience, from session rooms, to evening events, to exhibit hall browsing!

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What's new?

Big news for caterers! After a pandemic-induced hiatus, The Art of Catering Food, held in conjunction with the International Caterers Association, will return. Beginning Sunday, March 26 at the OCCC, this deep dive into flavors, techniques, and catering aesthetics will be just the ticket to jumpstart your week of learning. Samples galore, catering venues tour, a hands-on lunch experience are all part of the planning. More details will follow, of course, but we are thrilled to be able to relaunch this important gathering.



Sharing your wealth

Catersource + The Special Event's Call for Speakers is live and accepting sessions that explore culinary techniques, food and beverage trends, social gatherings, business and professional development, sales and marketing, sustainability, and more. Visit <https://cs2023.catersource-cfp.com> for all the details you need. The Call for Speakers will be open through July 31, then we will get to the task of vetting and decision making. Don't delay—your great ideas may be just what a professional new to our industry needs to succeed or could be the spark that gives seasoned veterans a leg up in their region. **CS**



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A TREND-SETTER IN ANAHEIM

Top Catering Trends Seen During Catersource



CHEF PAUL BUCHANAN (PRIMAL ALCHEMY CATERING) AND CHEF SEAN DENT (LEFT) SHOWCASED HOW TO COMPOSE AN ELABORATE CHARCUTERIE BOARD DURING *HOW TO CREATE GRAZING BOARDS THAT WILL DAZZLE YOUR CLIENTS & THEIR GUESTS!* PRIMAL ALCHEMY CATERING MAKES A MAJORITY OF THEIR CHARCUTERIE IN-HOUSE.

GET ON BOARD

All things grazing have hit an all-time high over the past several years. Whereas in 2020 and 2021 guests were looking for at-home party ideas (as discussed by Ryan Corvaia during *From Grazing Boards to Grab & Go—How to Launch a Winning Drop Off Catering Product*), this year it's all about community and gathering once again.

Charcuterie and cheese boards (as seen during Catersource + The Special Event's Connect Live and Closing Night Celebration evening events) have become the popular kids on the block, but other iterations have also begun to gain momentum. French fry boards anyone? How about dessert and brunch boards? Vegetarians are also getting in on the fun with fruit and vegetable boards.

The *How to Create Grazing Boards that will Dazzle Your Clients & Their Guests!* session on the Culinary & Main Stage truly showcased the versatility of grazing boards with the preparation of a cheese table (Julia Kendrick Conway; Assaggiare

Catersource may be over (at least until March of 2023 in Orlando), but inspiring trends seen during Catersource + The Special Event (turn to page 44 for our show recap) will live on. Let's look at some of this year's hottest trends and how you can incorporate them into your business.

"We're here to talk about this thing that other people call trends," said Michael Stavros (M Culinary Concepts) during his session *Caterers, Assemble!*—*Tantalizing Trends, Clever Concepts, Inspired Interactivity*, "but I don't like to call them trends. These are ideas that you can take back with you and adapt, modify, improve upon, and make your own."



(TOP LEFT) **JULIA KENDRICK CONWAY** WITH **ASSAGGIARE MENDOCINO** DESIGNED A SHOW-STOPPING CHEESE TABLE DURING **HOW TO CREATE GRAZING BOARDS THAT WILL DAZZLE YOUR CLIENTS & THEIR GUESTS!**

(BOTTOM LEFT) **THE GRAZING BOARD DURING CONNECT LIVE** FEATURED CHEESE, CHARCUTERIE, FRUITS, AND VEGETABLES.



Mendocino), a charcuterie table (Paul Buchanan; Primal Alchemy Catering), a fruit and vegetable table (Jennie Cook; Jennie Cooks Catering and Plant Based Parties), and finally a polenta table (Lee Anderson; Sugar Beach Events).

"From plant-based to not a plant in sight," said Stavros (who served as the moderator during the session). "We're all about diversity on this stage."

Beyond getting creative with what to put on your boards, there's also plenty of opportunity to get creative with how to serve. Rather than a traditional board, consider unique platters such as surfboards, skateboards, car panels, or wood pallets. Package them individually with cones, jars, or miniature boards. Display them on a charcuterie wall for more impact.

"You can make them rich, full, and lush," Stavros said. "You don't want to have your pile of meat over here, and your pile of cheese over there; you want to have some artistry to it."



LEE ANDERSON (SUGAR BEACH EVENTS) WENT NON-TRADITIONAL WITH HER GRAZING BOARD DURING **HOW TO CREATE GRAZING BOARDS THAT WILL DAZZLE YOUR CLIENTS & THEIR GUESTS!** WITH A POLENTA BOARD. AFTER SPREADING THE POLENTA (BOILED CORN MEAL) ON THE TABLE, ANDERSON THEN ADDED SUCH ACCOMPANIMENTS AS BOLOGNESE, BALSAMIC VINEGAR, ARTICHOKE, SHRIMP, ALMONDS, SHREDDED CHEESE, SUNDRIED TOMATOES, AND GREENS.

A TREND-SETTER IN ANAHEIM



VEG-ABILITIES

Plant-based options continue to grow in popularity as more consumers gravitate to healthier and more sustainable options.

One idea shared during Stavros' session was to have a vegan carving station, such as cauliflower steak (as seen during the Closing Night Celebration), to offer vegans a similar experience.

Cook demonstrated how vegan options can easily translate to grazing tables during *How to Create Grazing Boards that will Dazzle Your Clients & Their Guests!*

"I've been feeding vegans for a while now, and they're very grateful when they get food that is just for them, when they can eat everything," she said. "They love fried foods, they love big portions, they love bread—and I love all those things. You have to make it fun for vegans."

"It's just a matter of bringing omnivores to the vegan table and normalizing it by not talking about it."

Breakfast is even embracing the plant-based movement through the addition of vegan sausage, vegan hash, vegan chorizo, and even vegan eggs, as discussed by Chef Joe Pina during his session *Breakfast! It's Not Just for Breakfast Anymore*.

Attendees to Catersource + The Special Event's Venue & Culinary Tour experienced first-hand the plant-based

VEGETARIANS HAD AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE KOREAN BARBECUE STATION DURING THE CLOSING NIGHT CELEBRATION IN THE FORM OF **GRILLED CAULIFLOWER STEAK**, SERVED WITH ROASTED VEGETABLE COUS COUS, BROCCOLINI, RAINBOW CARROTS, ROASTED TOMATO, AND CHARRED TOMATILLO.



JENNIE COOK (JENNIE COOKS CATERING AND PLANT BASED PARTIES) SHOWCASED A FRUIT AND VEGETABLE GRAZING BOARD DURING *HOW TO CREATE GRAZING BOARDS THAT WILL DAZZLE YOUR CLIENTS & THEIR GUESTS!*



CHEF THOMAS RAMIREZ PREPARED **MEMPHIS-STYLE FRIED MUSHROOM SANDWICHES** DURING THE VENUE & CULINARY TOUR. PHOTO COURTESY CATERSOURCE STAFF

movement when they enjoyed a Memphis-style mushroom sandwich, a vegan take on a fried chicken sandwich comprised of a vegan brioche bun, veganaise mayonnaise, bread and butter pickles, and fried mushrooms dredged in Memphis spices. Crispy cauliflower tempura, served with a samosa aioli, were also on the menu during the Event Experience.

"You have to get creative with your vegan options," Stavros said. "However you're going to do it, you must make sure it's beautiful. You cannot neglect, you cannot overlook."



CONNECT LIVE (HELD AT THE RANCH) SERVED UP A COMFORT FOOD STAPLE IN THE FORM OF **MINIATURE GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICHES** (BLACK TRUFFLE/WHITE CHEDDAR/BRIOCHE). PHOTO COURTESY BYC PHOTOGRAPHY



CAN YOU GET ANY MORE COMFORTING THAN MEAT AND POTATOES? **COLETTE'S CATERING & EVENTS** SERVED **BRAISED SHORT RIBS WITH YUKON MASH, ROASTED SHALLOTS AND MICRO CHIVES** DURING THE OPENING NIGHT PARTY.

CASUAL COMFORT

Consumers always crave the familiar, which is why comfort food continues to remain a top trend year-after-year.

Whether it is grilled cheese (served during Connect Live), barbecue (prepared during Rich Rosendale and Christian Hernandez's session on *Elevating Flavors Through Presentation*) or a soup hors d'oeuvre served in a Campbell's soup can serving vessel, you can never go wrong with the familiar, but you also must elevate it to the next level.

"It's identifying how to elevate," said Rosendale (Rosendale Events). "It can be something as simple as taking flavor profiles that are craveable, and doing a smaller portion—that instantly refines it and elevates it. You now have something that is extraordinary.

"You can start with what you know, since everybody knows what's delicious."

STREET SMARTS

Street food (often defined as the international snacks from Asia, Mexico, and Africa) was once considered by some as "gross, dirty, or unhealthy," (a racist mindset according to closing keynote speaker Roy Choi). However, since that time the perception of food trucks and the street food movement has become one of inclusion (not exclusion).

"First they were pulling their kids away from the food trucks, and now they're hiring them for that same kid's birthday party," said Choi (Kogi Korean BBQ) during his Closing General Session. Food trucks have also served as an easy introduction for some people when it comes to embracing different culinary cultures.

"The authenticity of the food doesn't mean you have to come from that country, but you do have to have respect for the cuisine," he said.

The popularity of food trucks has also given rise to an increased awareness of international and fusion dishes. For example, the Closing Night Celebration featured a Korean barbecue station for guests to enjoy.

Guests to Catersource + The Special Event were treated to a diverse lineup of street food offerings during the Food Truck Roundup on the first day of the conference.

Street food does not necessarily have to be sold out of a truck either. Several "street food" staples such as bao buns have made the transition from street star to late night nosh (turn to page 58 for more on that).



ATTENDEES TO CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT HAD THE OPTION OF ENJOYING STREET FOOD ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE CONFERENCE DURING THE FOOD TRUCK ROUNDUP.

A TREND-SETTER IN ANAHEIM

BRENDA BACKAL
(BBACK4MORE LLC / BB'S
KITCHEN) PREPARED HER
TAKE ON A **STRAWBERRY
PARFAIT** (WITH ROSEMARY
AND CARAMEL) FOR THE
"SWEET BITE" PORTION OF
THE DICED COMPETITION.



THE SWEET LIFE

There is a reason dessert is served at the end of the meal: they are often what guests look forward to the most. Who doesn't love a little sweet treat?

Sweets can take myriad forms, ranging from frozen treats (such as the popsicles served during the Closing Night Celebration) or bite-sized desserts (such as the crème brûlée or tarts served during Connect Live).

This year's conference even addressed this sweet trend head-on during *No Pastry Chef? No Problem* (presented by Robert Mitchell and Deanna Johnson with Bold Catering & Events), and by challenging competitors to develop a sweet bite during the DICED competition.



(ABOVE) **MINIATURE CRÈME BRÛLÉE DESSERTS** WERE SERVED DURING CONNECT LIVE. PHOTO COURTESY BYC PHOTOGRAPHY

(LEFT) **JEANELLE POWERY'S (CHOCTAW CASINO & RESORT)** DESSERT BITE FOR THE DICED COMPETITION FEATURED **FRESH BERRIES AND NUTELLA**.

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FOOD CAN BRING A POP OF COLOR TO EVENTS, SUCH AS THIS **COLORFUL MACARON TOWER** SEEN DURING THE EVENT EXPERIENCE.



A SPLASH OF COLOR

Color can pack a mighty punch during events by instantly adding drama and impact.

"Color literally makes your experience stand out," said Stella Rankin during her *Memorable Experiences Through Re-Imagined Catering* session. "Nothing signals 'look at me, I'm over here,' like the juxtaposition of colors."

Cook brought impact to her fruit and vegetable grazing board using color blocking by grouping like-colored foods together.

"I went to the Salvation Army one day and they had color coded all of the books," she said, "and that just ignited something in me. It's a great way to make a splash."

Color can also be incorporated into events through colored ice cubes, signature cocktails, balloons, and other décor elements, and even dessert tables (such as the French macaron towers seen during the Event Experience).

BLAST FROM THE PAST

After the experiences of the past several years, guests are looking forward to a return to normalcy and a return to the familiar, which is why nostalgia has become such a staple of events.

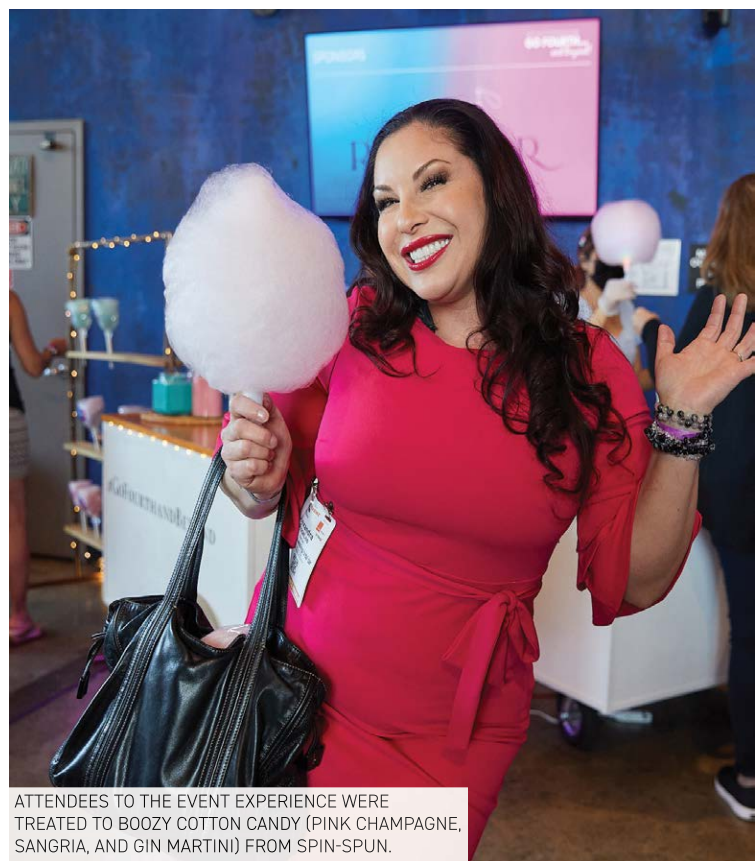
"A sentimental longing for the past is a common, universally and highly social emotional experience," Rankin said. "We often crave things that are a return to the familiar. Nostalgia is a very powerful emotion because we all have a desire for the past."

Piggy backing off the grazing board trend, consider serving individual charcuterie and cheese boards in customized 'Lunchable' containers, thus bringing guests back to their elementary school days.

This year's Closing Night Celebration was full of nostalgia (for every generation) using "decade rooms": root beer floats in the 1960s; Blue Hawaiians, lava lamps, and disco balls in the 1970s; a candy bar and Pac Man-costumed characters in the 1980s; and soft pretzels, bean bag chairs, and an adult-version of Capri Sun in the 1990s.

"Evoking things from the past leaves a lasting impression on the guests," Rankin said. "By tapping into our guests' minds, souls, and experiences we can bring out the kid in everyone."

The Event Experience also brought a bit of fun and nostalgia with its booze-flavored cotton candy (pink champagne, sangria, and gin martini).



ATTENDEES TO THE EVENT EXPERIENCE WERE TREATED TO BOOZY COTTON CANDY (PINK CHAMPAGNE, SANGRIA, AND GIN MARTINI) FROM SPIN-SPUN.



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A TREND-SETTER IN ANAHEIM

BORIS SEYMORE DESIGNED A CALIFORNIA-THEMED BUFFET TABLE FOR HIS SESSION ON *HOW TO UPSELL YOUR EVENT WITH BESPOKE BUFFETS*.



THE POWER OF THEME

Establishing a theme for an event can help create a cohesive vision and aesthetic for an event.

"You don't stop at the food, you don't stop at the vessel the food goes in, you don't stop at the tray the vessel goes on, you don't stop at the glassware," Stavros said.

When talking about theme, there are differing degrees to do it. For example, maybe you're hosting a California or beach event; why not bring that aesthetic to your buffet table through the food that is served, as well as through the tiny details such as seashells and surfboards (as seen during Boris Seymore's session on how to *Upsell Your Event with Bespoke Buffets*). Or maybe you want to go all out with the theme, such as Elias Events' Halloween-themed A Spooktacular Night, complete with spooky décor and frightful food (turn to page 68 in the adjoining *Special Events* magazine for more on the Gala-nominated event).



(ABOVE AND BELOW LEFT) BORIS SEYMORE'S CALIFORNIA-THEMED BUFFET TABLE FEATURED SURF BOARDS, SEASHELLS, CALIFORNIA STREET SIGNS, AND CALIFORNIA INSPIRED FOOD OPTIONS (TACOS, EGG ROLLS, TROPICAL SALADS, AND SLIDERS). PHOTOS COURTESY CATERSOURCE STAFF



THE CONNECT LIVE EVENT THEMED MANY AREAS OF THE EVENT VENUE TO SPECIFIC AREAS OF CALIFORNIA SUCH AS BEVERLY HILLS AND WINE COUNTRY. PHOTO COURTESY BYC PHOTOGRAPHY

CHEERS TO THAT

Cocktail trends are constantly changing and evolving, and many of this year's trends are paying close attention to ingredients, skill, and, in many cases, health.

Cannabis and CBD cocktails have been finding their way onto menus and into events recently, as discussed by Nettie Frank during *Infuse Your Business with CBD* and by Dan Braunstein during *Cannabis Drinks*.

Temperance and non-alcoholic options continue to be sought out by consumers, so make sure you understand the ins and outs of how to craft these cocktails (the Swizzle competition even challenged this year's competitors to mix up a temperance drink).

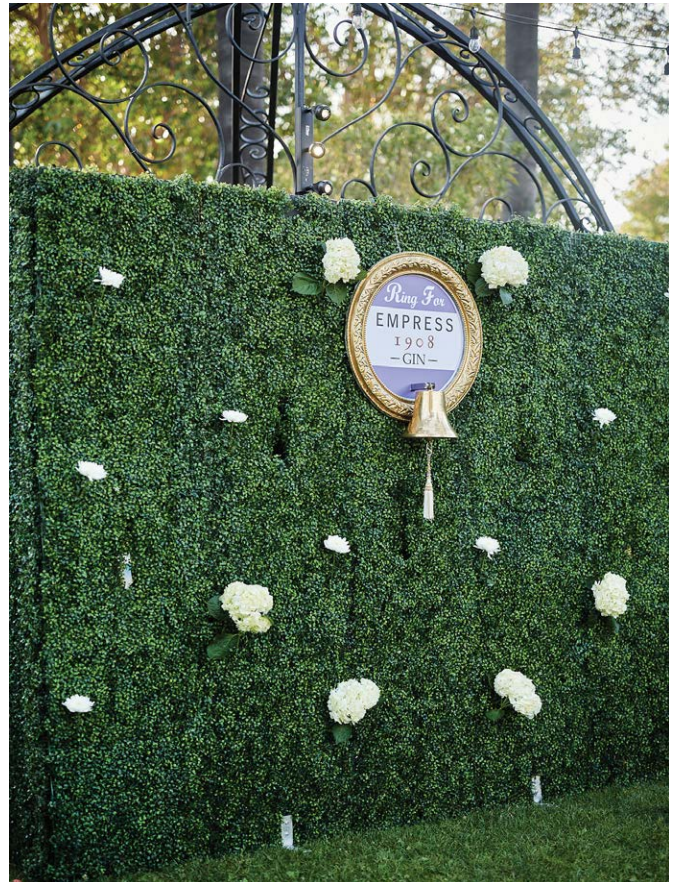
Ready-to-serve cocktails are also making a splash at events because of their simplicity.

"This means I don't have to have a bartender," Stavros said.

"This means anyone with two hands and a church key can pop a can."

Lastly, it is important to remember to have your cocktails make an impact, whether it is through flair bartending (like The Cup Bearer's performance during the Closing General Session) or through experience (such as Champagne Creative's surprise cocktails during the Opening Night Party).

"Make the bar interesting," Stavros said. "Find something that will draw people in."



COCKTAILS SHOULD MAKE AN IMPACT DURING EVENTS. AN EXAMPLE WOULD BE **CHAMPAGNE CREATIVE'S EMPRESS GIN STATION** WHERE GUESTS COULD RING THE BELL FOR A COCKTAIL, AND THEN THEIR DRINK WOULD MAGICALLY APPEAR FROM ONE OF THE SECRET HOLES WITHIN THE HEDGE.



The Cup Bearer gave a flair bartending performance during the Closing General Session. Spectacle and flair are great additions to your bar program in order to leave an impact.

A TREND-SETTER IN ANAHEIM



(Above) **Beautiful food displays** (and their servers) can bring a touch of 'wow', glam, and elegance to an event, such as these displays during the Event Experience.


(Below) **Cooking with nitro** (such as **Super Cool Creamery** during the Opening Night Party) adds a bit of drama to any event.

THE 'WOW' FACTOR

Guests are looking for the Instagram-able moments at events.

Hawker trays have always been a popular addition to events, but you can take these even further by dressing up the servers (such as those seen during Connect Live and the Event Experience).

Interactive and experiential food stations are also great ways to bring the "wow" factor to your event. During his session, Rosendale discussed the popularity and impact of live fire cooking during events. Nitro cooking can have a similar impact (without the flames) since the smoke instantly adds drama (such as the nitro ice cream and popcorn offered during the Opening Night Party). You can also get creative with how you serve and display your food, whether it's hanging food from the walls (like pretzels hanging from a wire fence during the Closing Night Celebration).

"How do you cut through the clutter and create something truly unforgettable? Through happy surprises and memorable moments," Rankin said. "The future success of catering is 100 percent reliant upon understanding the needs of your guests at any given moment and then delivering on that in an unforgettable way." 

See the Trends. Set the Trends.

The **Catersource Conference & Tradeshow** is the only annual event of its kind. A show of unrivaled influence and inspiration, it's a spirited gathering of all the people, ideas, and trending innovations shaping the catering and events industry.

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By Amber Kispert



An ACE in the Hole

ORCHESTRATING AN EVENT during a pandemic requires a lot of problem-solving and creativity—but not for 24 Carrots Catering and Events.


As this year's recipient of Best Off-Premise Catering, the SoCal favorite put a spotlight on the history and culture of California during a fundraiser for Orange County's Pacific Symphony with its event "Fandango! Alta California."

"Alta California" refers to a Mexican territory (formerly "New Spain") that was established in 1822 following the Mexican War of Independence.

For the event, 24 Carrots transformed a vast, open-air lawn into an intimate, beautiful experience for the senses. Spanish-inspired décor greeted guests, with 40-foot arches draped in bougainvillea towering over the main stage. Mixed textures and mediums of rustic wood,

Spanish linen, bone flatware, and cowhide were all as beautiful and on-theme to the touch as they were visually stunning. Florals were vibrant and celebratory, and technology was woven seamlessly to ensure guests were able to view the program from anywhere on the field. By using elements of design and event production, guests were transported to an immersive experience.

Additionally, 24 Carrots created a menu that not only honored Alta California, but it was also tangible and enticing to guests. By emphasizing ingredients that were prominent during the harvest, but presenting them in modern, elevated dishes, 24 Carrots was able to present a food experience that wasn't just gala food, but truly an extension of the curated experience.

Congratulations to this year's Best Off-Premise Catering ACE award winner! 





GUEST WELCOME AND REGISTRATION
Photo courtesy Villa Visuals

ACE

Achievement in Catered Events

ACE Submissions Now Being Accepted

It's once again time to celebrate the best of the best! Nominations are now being accepted for the Catersource 2023 Achievement in Catered Events awards. We invite you to submit your best work from the past year. Join in the excitement and the spirit of our industry as we celebrate the hard work and exceptional accomplishments of our peers. Eligible events must have occurred between January 01, 2022 and November 30, 2022.

To submit an entry to this year's ACE Awards, please visit our awards portal at <https://ace-gala.awardsplatform.com>.



A SPANISH-INSPIRED COURTYARD EVOKED IMAGES OF THE SPANISH MISSION, COMPLETE WITH MISSION-INSPIRED LANTERNS.
Photo courtesy Villa Visuals



THE OYSTER STATION FEATURED GRILLED OYSTERS WITH SMOKED PAPRIKA GARLIC BUTTER AND LEMON.
Photo courtesy Villa Visuals

EVENT SOLUTIONS, CONT.



THE MAIN STAGE WAS FRAMED IN BOUGAINVILLEA AND DECORATED WITH ESTRELLA PRINTED FAUX TILES.

Photo courtesy Villa Visuals



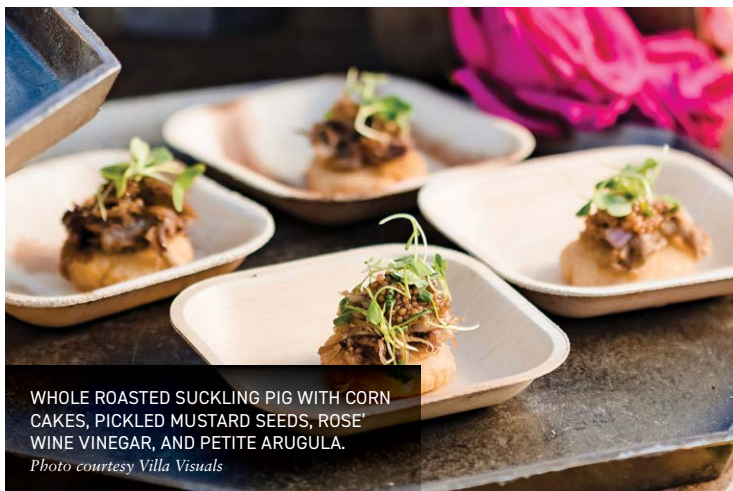
SHRIMP PAELLA, BABY SQUASH AND ZUCCHINI, HEIRLOOM CHERRY TOMATOES, PRESERVED LEMON AIOLI. *Photo courtesy Villa Visuals*



WOODEN LASER-CUT MENUS COMMUNICATED THE DAY'S OFFERINGS, WHICH FEATURED ALL GLUTEN-FREE ITEMS. *Photo courtesy Villa Visuals*



THE PLATED DUAL ENTRÉE FEATURED SLOW ROASTED PRIME STRIP LOIN AND DIVER SEA SCALLOPS SERVED WITH BRAISED SPANISH GIGANTE BEANS, ROASTED BABY ZUCCHINI AND PATTY PAN SQUASH, SWEET CORN, BRAISED OXTAIL JUS, POPCORN SPROUTS, AND PEA TENDRILS. Photo courtesy Annie White Photography



WHOLE ROASTED SUCKLING PIG WITH CORN CAKES, PICKLED MUSTARD SEEDS, ROSE WINE VINEGAR, AND PETITE ARUGULA. Photo courtesy Villa Visuals



THE "SLICE OF LIFE VIGNETTE" FEATURED A VINTAGE PRODUCE CART FILLED WITH FRUIT, VEGETABLES, FLOWERS, AND PROPS TO HELP TRANSPORT GUESTS BACK IN TIME. Photo courtesy Villa Visuals



THE TABLES WERE SET WITH SPANISH LINEN, BONE FLATWARE, CUT CRYSTAL STEMWARE, WHITE AND BLACK SPANISH TILE INSPIRED CHARGERS, AND LINEN NAPKINS FOR AN EARTHY YET ELEVATED DINING EXPERIENCE. Photo courtesy Villa Visuals



THE PORK CONFIT STATION FEATURED SUCKLING PIG. Photo courtesy Villa Visuals

FROM BEER TO BOURBON

Sean O'Neil (Crafter's Cocktails) emerges victorious as **2022 Swizzle champion** during Catersource + The Special Event

I HATE TIKI DRINKS

For the bourbon cocktail, Sean wanted to do something unique. He has a friend who loves the drink but is a bourbon drinker through and through. This cocktail offers a twist by setting the over-proofed cocktail inside the husk of a lemon.

"That's the vibes, that's the experience there," emcee Justin Pasha said. "I got fancy on us again with this."

INGREDIENTS

- 1.75 oz bourbon
- 0.5 oz Napoleon mandarin
- 1.25 oz fresh pineapple juice
- 0.5 oz lemon juice
- 0.5 oz smoked cinnamon
- 5 dashes Mace tincture
- 0.25 oz old fashioned traditional dark (OFTD) rum
- Sprinkle cinnamon
- Pineapple leaves

METHOD

1. Add all ingredients except rum to a shaker tin with ice. Shake and pour over fresh ice in tiki mug.
2. Hollow out half a lemon and place OFTD rum inside. Set on fire and light on fire. Sprinkle cinnamon over top.
3. Serve while on fire and have guest blow out and pour over drink. Pineapple leaves as a drink floater.

By Amber Kispert

INKS

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All photos courtesy WASIO Photography unless otherwise noted.

O riginally from London, England (and now based in Austin, Texas) you may say Sean O'Neil (Crafter's Cocktails) knows his way around cocktails.

With over 17 years of experience, O'Neil has become a craft cocktail visionary. You could see the true evidence of that statement during the annual Swizzle Competition when O'Neil emerged victorious (fresh on the heels of his 2020 appearance) as this year's champion.

"I felt like I had some unfinished business after my first Swizzle," he said, "and have really grown as a mixologist in the last couple of years."

O'Neil and his fellow competitors (Nettie Frank, Cindy Cafferty, and Freddie Viren) were challenged to concoct three distinct cocktails: a temperance drink, a gin-based cocktail, and lastly a bourbon drink.

Justin Pasha with The Cup Bearer served as host and master of ceremonies, while three of his flair bartenders sat behind the judge's table. They commended O'Neil for his creativity, his balance of flavors, and how he could combine elements.

"I believe each drink was made with a purpose and each brought you to a place in your mind where they were supposed to be enjoyed," O'Neil said.



(ABOVE) SEAN O'NEIL OF CRAFTER'S COCKTAILS WAS NAMED THE 2022 SWIZZLE COMPETITION VICTOR DURING CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT (MAY 2-5 IN ANAHEIM, CALIF.) PHOTO COURTESY SEAN O'NEIL

(LEFT) SEAN O'NEIL PREPARES HIS BOURBON COCKTAIL FOR SWIZZLE.

(FACING PAGE) I HATE TIKI DRINKS OFFERS A SURPRISE BY SETTING THE OVER-PROOFED RUM ON FIRE INSIDE THE HUSK OF A LEMON. PHOTO COURTESY SEAN O'NEIL



WITH OVER 17 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, SEAN O'NEIL HAS BECOME A CRAFT COCKTAIL VISIONARY. HE AND HIS WIFE OWN AND OPERATE CRAFTER'S COCKTAILS, A BUSINESS THAT NOW SERVES THE GREATER AUSTIN AREA AND CONTINUES TO GROW. HE HAS ALREADY MADE OVER 150 DIFFERENT COCKTAIL MIXERS AND IS CONSTANTLY EXPERIMENTING WITH NEW FLAVOR COMBINATIONS. THE COMPANY HAS SINCE TRANSITIONED INTO EVENTS, WITH THE GOAL OF OPENING A MOBILE BAR.

Harnessing his craft

O'Neil began bartending in and around Atlantic City where he developed his flair for mixology.

"I love creating an experience and opening people up to drinks they have never had before."

After moving to Austin in 2016, he expanded his knowledge to the world of craft beer.

"I love figuring out their flavor preferences and then introducing them to a world of flavors they didn't know they could find in a beer," he said. "I can take away a bit of the intimidation and snobbery that some people associate with craft beer and help them learn what to look for when they find themselves in that scene. I like people to feel comfortable, but also go outside their comfort zone and hopefully open up that world of flavors for them."

Despite his foray into the craft beer

world, O'Neil's passion has always remained in craft cocktails.

"Every ingredient is important; from the liquor you choose to the ice in your glass," he said. "Even the highest quality liquor can be spoiled if you are not using fresh ingredients. Fresh squeezed juices, homemade syrups, and clear ice are just a few important things to think about when building a cocktail."

Making his mark

Shortly after competing in the 2020 Catersource Swizzle Competition, O'Neil (and his wife) began creating cocktail mixers and delivering them to his neighbors so that they could make their own cocktails while stuck at home (in the midst of a pandemic).

"As many of my hospitality brethren know, the first few weeks of the pandemic were quite terrifying, not only with a deadly disease spreading around

the world, but also not knowing where your next paycheck was coming from, especially with the extreme struggles to get through to unemployment offices," he said. "By creating craft cocktail mixers for my neighbors and friends I was able to spread a little joy. We wanted to give people something to look forward to."

Eventually, the local community got behind the couple and helped spread the word and it quickly turned into Crafter's Cocktails, a business that now serves the greater Austin area and continues to grow. He has already made over 150 different cocktail mixers and is constantly experimenting with new flavor combinations.

"It has been a ton of fun and honestly a great distraction from falling down a rabbit hole of anxiety during the early days of the pandemic," he said. "Bringing happiness to people and creating something from nothing was a pure joy."

"We love to pick up fruit from a local produce wholesaler, create fresh syrups, squeeze all our own juices, grow our own herbs, and experiment with new flavors every week."

A splash of creativity

Now, as more bars have opened and most everyone has gone back to working pre-pandemic jobs, Crafter's Cocktails has transitioned into focusing on providing mixers for events. In addition to an extensive menu to choose from, Crafter's Cocktails can also create something new based on the clients' tastes and theme of their event.

O'Neil's newest venture is designing an aesthetically-pleasing and highly-functional mobile bar for wedding and corporate events alike. Eventually, O'Neil would love to open his own brick-and-mortar cocktail bar.

Featured here are two of O'Neil's Swizzle-winning cocktail recipes. Visit catersource.com for his Wagon Rider (non-alcoholic) recipe.

Cheers! 

EXPORT OPINION

For the gin cocktail round, O'Neil wanted to take inspiration from the past and create something totally new. He drew on flavors he enjoyed during a road trip in Europe, while combining them with his love for both Negronis and Bee's Knees cocktails.

"Sean is making magic," Pasha said during the Swizzle Competition's gin round. "The question is, do they taste as good as they look because they look really good."

INGREDIENTS

1.5 oz gin
0.25 oz Amaro
Splash of port wine
0.5 oz honey
0.75 oz lemon
0.5 oz Chambord
½ an egg white
Sliced cucumber for garnish

METHOD

1. Add all ingredients to shaker tin and dry shake for 15 seconds
2. Add ice and shake again
3. Double strain into coupe



HOW TO ELEVATE ANY BAR PROGRAM

During his Cocktail Catering session, Justin Pasha (The Cup Bearer) identified the key areas that will elevate any bar program.

"The bar experience should be the same as the food experience," he said during his session. "You have to think of these mixologists the same way you think of your chefs."

Ingredients

The first place to start upping your cocktail game is to invest in the highest quality ingredients. Fresh juices, premium mixers, modern garnishes, and craft syrups can all play a pivotal role in elevating the flavor profiles and sophistication of your cocktails. Also, it's important to consider ingredients for non-alcoholic options as well.

Equipment

It may seem simple but having the right bar setup can be all that separates you from a stellar bar program to one that just gets by. Consider the tools you have behind the bar; are there any that need replacement? Why not add a few showstoppers like the Flavour Blaster gun or a smoking torch? Additionally, how often do we hear that first impressions are everything? Every. Single. Day. Which is exactly why your bar's décor can be just as important as what is on the menu. Cozy, soft lighting sets the right mood for whiskey cocktails, but they don't have quite the same effect on a tequila and margarita bar. Make sure your décor is giving off the right vibe so your guests can truly enjoy your cocktails.

Experience

Make sure you have the staff to match the level of cocktails that you are serving. Experienced staff who know their way around the bar are essential to showcasing the cocktails you took the time and effort to develop. Being a bartender should be about more than pouring drinks, it can also be "bar theater." Mixing and shaking cocktails is a delicate ballet in some respects: the elegant stir of a spoon, the graceful pour of a bottle, the rhythmic sound of your shaker.

Recipe selection

Lastly, make sure your menu stays interesting. While you want to have some of the standards, it is also important to pay attention to cocktail trends.

Additionally, when building your recipes and menu offerings, try to focus on cocktails that have four ingredients or less, and options that can easily be batched.

"This is still catering after all," Pasha said, "this is not a bar."

Finally, don't forget the flair. Whether it's a beautiful garnish, a smoked glass, or colored ice cubes, this is where the impact happens.

"You need something catchy," Pasha said. "It's that little something that's worth Instagramming, that drives home that sense of mixology."



JUSTIN PASHA SERVED AS THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES DURING THIS YEAR'S SWIZZLE COMPETITION. HERE HE SPEAKS TO THE JUDGES.

PART 1

SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD SERIES



By Amber Kispert

(RIGHT) ASIDE FROM BEING
DELICIOUS, SEAFOOD IS ALSO
GREAT FOR YOUR HEALTH.

*Photo courtesy Oshen Salmon and
BlueGlacier*



What Caters

Part 1 in our
seafood series: what
seafood and how



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ch!

sustainable
at is sustainable
w to source it

As beef prices continue to rise and supply chain issues plague the industry, seafood has been making a splash on menus across the world. However, with increased reliance on seafood comes more risk to the oceans. As demand for seafood grows, it's also ushering in a new wave of consumer interest in the sustainability practices that bring fish to the table. There are a lot of terms used to imply that seafood is sustainably fished and harvested, but what do they really mean?

WHAT IS SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD?

Just as flexitarian or plant-based menus aim to support sustainability on land, sustainable seafood practices (fishing and farming) can contribute to overall ocean health.

Generally, the definition of “sustainable seafood” is “seafood that is either caught or farmed in ways that follow best practices to protect the environment and natural ocean habitats,” [according to an interview in FSR magazine](#) with Chef Thomas Card (formerly with North Carolina’s Counting House).

The main cause of seafood strife, according to the article, is overfishing, which means that a species of fish is being removed from a body of water at a rate so great that the species cannot replenish.

The growing demand for seafood worldwide has led to buyers and consumers seeking assurances that seafood conforms to higher standards of quality, safety, traceability, and sustainability—especially since sustainability and ocean stewardship is the key to a healthy ocean for fishermen, fishing communities, and consumers.

“Much like other forms of sustainability, sustainable seafood has grown in the minds of chefs because of the amount of information that is available to us,” says Chef Nick Klug, Vice President of Culinary, Sports & Entertainment for Proof of the Pudding out of Atlanta. “It is important to use products that are sustainably sourced so that future generations can enjoy these food items as well. The more we abuse the environment, overfish the oceans, and treat our farmland with toxic chemicals, the worse the problem is going to become.”



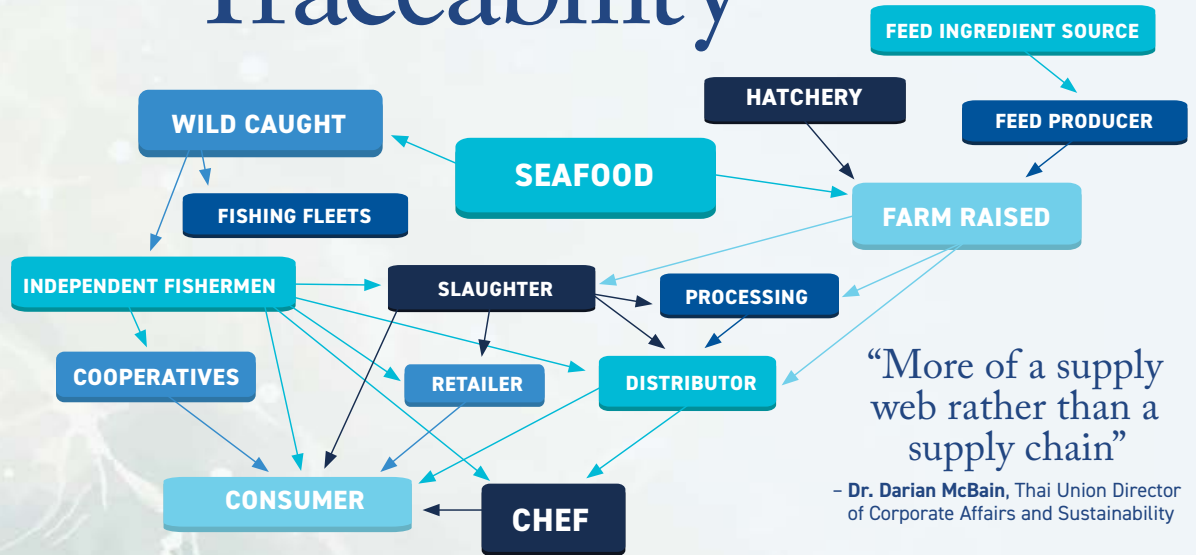
(ABOVE) **TEQUILA LIME GRILLED SALMON** WITH HEIRLOOM TOMATO-SHALLOT SALAD / CORIANDER-LIME EMULSION / TEQUILA-TOMATO BEURRE BLANC. *Photo courtesy Proof of the Pudding*

(RIGHT) **OVER 12,000 JOBS ARE CREATED AROUND FISHING AND AQUACULTURE IN SCOTLAND.** SCOTLAND'S FISHERMEN, FARMERS, AND PRODUCERS INNOVATE AND ADAPT TO MODERN DAY MARKET DEMANDS, WHILE STAYING TRUE TO DEEP ROOTED TRADITIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN HANDED DOWN THROUGH THE GENERATIONS. *Photo courtesy Seafood from Scotland*



SEAFOOD CONTAINS NUTRIENTS THAT ARE LINKED TO A MULTITUDE OF BENEFITS, INCLUDING A REDUCED RISK OF CORONARY HEART DISEASE. SHELLFISH AND FISH (PARTICULARLY SALMON, TUNA, AND TROUT) ARE ALSO A SOURCE OF OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS, WHICH PROMOTE HEART AND BRAIN HEALTH. *Photo courtesy Oshen Salmon and BlueGlacier*

Traceability



(ABOVE) TRACEABILITY IS ONE OF THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES RELATED TO SUSTAINABLE SEAFOOD. INFORMATION COURTESY THE JAMES BEARD FOUNDATION AND SMART CATCH

(LEFT) ALL SCOTTISH FISHERMEN COMPLY WITH STRICT REGULATIONS TO DELIVER A SUSTAINABLE AND TRACEABLE SUPPLY OF SEAFOOD FROM NET TO PLATE. Photo courtesy Seafood from Scotland

Fortunately, there are a lot of different ways to bring sustainable seafood to your menus just swimmingly.

FROM BOAT TO PLATE

The key to sustainable seafood is that it is either line caught or diver caught, rather than caught in nets, which causes damage to other wildlife around the desired catch.

For example, Scottish salmon farmers have developed the [Scottish Salmon Sustainability Charter](#), which sets out pledges and commitments to work toward a more sustainable, traceable product with a

more positive impact on the environment and local communities. Those five pledges are:

1. We will apply the highest standards of animal welfare
2. We will work continuously to minimise our impact and ensure a healthy environment
3. We will produce healthy, nutritious food with full traceability every step of the way
4. We will become the sector of choice for people looking to make a positive difference
5. We will be good neighbors in every way, increasing our positive social impact



SALMON KEBABS WITH FRESH MANGO SALSA

Recipe courtesy Chef
Maranatha Leconte
for Blue Glacier

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

12 oz salmon
1 ea. zucchini
1 ea. squash
½ ea. purple onion
½ ea. red bell pepper
½ ea. green pepper
1 T adobo seasoning
1 T creole seasoning
1 T garlic powder
1 T extra virgin olive oil
Kebab skewers

INGREDIENTS FOR SALSA

1 ea. mango
1 jar of your favorite salsa

METHOD

1. Dice up all fresh produce and place into a large bowl. Throw in dry seasoning and extra virgin olive oil. Add the salmon chunks and mix

together. Let marinate for at least two hours. For more flavor, consider marinating for up to 24 hours.

2. Place the salmon chunks and produce on kebab skewers and bake at 375 degrees or pan fry in a large skillet on medium heat.

3. For the salsa, simply dice the mango and add it into your favorite salsa mix. Similar to the salmon, let marinate for up to 24 hours.



Seafood Watch Fisheries Pe

CRITERION 1
Impacts on the
Stock

ABUNDANCE

**FISHING
MORTALITY**

CRITERION 2
Impacts on Other
Species

ABUNDANCE

**FISHING
MORTALITY**

**FEED
FOOTPRINT**

Seafood Watch Aquaculture

CRITERION 1
Data

**DATA
AVAILABILITY,
QUALITY AND
CONFIDENCE**

CRITERION 2
Effluent

**EVIDENCE OR
RISK-BASED
ASSESSMENT
OF WASTE
DISCHARGED**

**MANAGEMENT
OF FARM-
LEVEL AND
CUMULATIVE
IMPACTS**

CRITERION 6
Escapes

**ESCAPE
RISK**

**COMPETITIVE
AND GENETIC
INTERACTIONS**

CRITERION 7
Disease, Pathogen
and Parasite
Interaction

**EVIDENCE OR
RISK-BASED
ASSESSMENT
OF PATHOGEN
AND PARASITE
INTERACTION**

Performance Criteria

CRITERION 3 Management Effectiveness

STRATEGY & IMPLEMENTATION

BYCATCH STRATEGY

RESEARCH & MONITORING

ENFORCEMENT

STAKEHOLDER INCLUSION

CRITERION 4 Impacts on Habitats & Ecosystems

IMPACTS ON HABITAT

MITIGATION OF GEAR IMPACTS

ECOSYSTEM-BASED FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

(LEFT AND BELOW)
THE CRITERIA THAT
THE MONTEREY
BAY AQUARIUM'S
SEAFOOD WATCH
USES FOR
EVALUATING
FISHERIES AND
AQUACULTURE
OPERATIONS ON
WHETHER THEY ARE
SUSTAINABLE
*Information courtesy
the Monterey Bay
Aquarium Seafood
Watch*

Performance Criteria

CRITERION 3 Habitat

HABITAT
CONVERSION
AND FUNCTION

FARM SITING
REGULATION
AND
MANAGEMENT

CRITERION 4 Chemical Use

EVIDENCE
OR RISK OF
CHEMICAL
USE

CRITERION 5 Feed

WILD FISH USE

NET PROTEIN
GAIN/LOSS

FEED
FOOTPRINT

CRITERION 8 Source of Stock- Independence from Wild Fisheries

INDEPENDENCE
FROM WILD
CAPTURE
FISHERIES

CRITERION 9 Predator and Wildlife Mortalities

LIKELIHOOD OF
POPULATION
LEVEL IMPACTS
ON WILDLIFE
THAT INTERACT
WITH THE
FARM

CRITERION 10 Escape of Secondary Species

ESCAPE RISK OF
ALIEN SPECIES
ASSOCIATED
WITH
TRANSPORT
OF ANIMALS
(ALIVE OR
DEAD)

Another sustainable seafood practice is ocean farming (such as aquaculture) where the waste that fish and shellfish are subjected to is reduced, and they are fed clean diets. A bonus to aquaculture is that shellfish farming has emerged as a promising, low-cost tool to help improve water quality.

"It's one thing for a chef to say 'Yes, I want to be sustainable,' but it's another for them to actually get that information," said Corey Peat with [Postelsia](#), which oversees the James Beard Foundation's (JBF) sustainable seafood rating program [Smart Catch](#), during a recent webinar for the JBF. "Traceability is how we know something is sustainable because not all suppliers are equal."

Which is why sourcing and finding the right seafood supplier is the first step in bringing sustainable seafood into the kitchen.

SUSTAINABLY SOURCING

Sourcing is the starting point for chefs and fortunately, there is an abundance of resources available for chefs to educate themselves on proper seafood sourcing. In addition to [Smart Catch](#), chefs can also reference tools such as [Monterey Bay Aquarium's Seafood Watch](#), which is a quick and easy way to find what types of marine life are a preferred choice and which should be avoided based on the program's assessments that identify the environmental performance of fisheries or aquaculture operations.

Being aware of sustainability accreditations for suppliers is also another way to be cognizant of where you are sourcing your seafood from. Examples of certifications and accreditations include the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC), the Aquaculture Stewardship Council (ASC), and Best Aquaculture Practices (BAP).

"By first understanding how your decisions as a chef affects these outcomes, chefs can begin to harness this knowledge in designing their own menus," said Christopher Golden (Assistant Professor of Nutrition and Planetary Health at Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and member of the Blue Food Assessment Scientific Leadership Team) during the [Culinary Institute of America's Menus of Change 2021](#) seminar *Blue Food: Oceans & Fisheries, Product Innovation, and the Professional Kitchen*. "It's win-win for both environment and for nutrition."

Part 2 of our sustainable seafood series will publish in the fall issue of Catersource, where we will look at menu development and recipe inspiration. [CS](#)

ROASTED SCOTTISH SALMON

Recipe courtesy Chef Grant MacPherson,
Seafood Scotland Culinary Council

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 4 6-oz Scottish salmon fillets
- 1 ea. spaghetti squash
- 1 large fennel bulb
- 4 ea. parsnips
- 2 T lemon oil
- 1 pint cherry tomatoes, quartered
- 1 T minced shallot
- 1 T sherry vinegar
- ½ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 T grapeseed oil
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Preheat the oven to 350°F. Cut the spaghetti squash in half and remove the seeds. Place the cut squash onto a foil lined sheet tray and bake for 40 minutes, until fork tender. When cooked, use a fork to carefully pull the flesh away from the skin.
2. Peel and cut the parsnips into 5-inch batons that are ½-inch thick. Spread the cut parsnips onto a parchment lined sheet tray, drizzle with oil and roast for 15 minutes at 450°F.
3. Cut a handful of fennel fronds and spread them on a silicon mat lined sheet tray. Lay another silicone mat directly over, followed by a sheet tray. Bake for 30 minutes at 350°F then remove the trays and let cool. Remove the top tray then carefully remove the top silicone mat. The fronds should be dry and brittle.

4. Use a mandolin to thinly slice the fennel bulb. Toss with lemon oil in a bowl.
5. Combine the sliced tomatoes, shallot, vinegar and extra-virgin olive oil in a bowl. Season with salt and pepper. Let rest for 15 minutes before using.
6. Season the salmon with salt and pepper. Heat the grapeseed oil in a nonstick pan. Gently place the salmon into the pan, lightly pressing so it all makes contact with the pan. Cook for 4 minutes, without moving. Using a fish spatula, carefully flip the fillets and cook for another 4 minutes. The fish should have formed a

light golden-brown crust on both sides. Remove from the heat and pat on a paper towel lined plate.

ASSEMBLY

Evenly distribute the roasted spaghetti squash between the middle of each plate. Add 5-6 parsnip batons and spoon ¼ cup of the tomato dressing around the plate. Place a salmon fillet on each mound of squash and parsnips and top with a small handful of the dressed fennel. Garnish with dried fennel fronds



A SUSTAINABLE BLUE SALMON FILLET FROM AFISHIONADO.

Photo courtesy Oceanwise
Seafood Festival





RED CHILE TUNA TARTARE

*Recipe courtesy Chef Nick Klug,
Vice President of Culinary, Sports &
Entertainment for Proof of the Pudding*

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb albacore tuna
- 1 tsp achiote paste
- 5 ea. Guajillo chile
- 4 oz lime juice
- ½ cup red onions, minced
- 1 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 2 garlic cloves

METHOD

1. On a dry pan over medium heat, toast the garlic for 7-10 minutes - it will get dark to black in some spots. Remove the garlic and toast the Guajillos, about 10 seconds per side. Cover the chiles with boiling hot water and let sit for 20-30 minutes until soft. Remove the chiles and discard the water. Add the garlic, lime juice, achiote paste, and Guajillos to a blender and blend until smooth. Cool the chile mixture.
2. Place the tuna in the freezer until it becomes slightly firm, it will be easier to cut this way. Cut the tuna into a small dice, ¼" or less.
3. Add the chile mixture to the tuna, add red onions and cilantro and mix thoroughly to combine. Add on top of fried wonton shell or tostada shell as a killer cold app, garnish with a radish and some cilantro.

Note: This is used as a filling in a wonton taco for a passed appetizer.

SMOKED LOCH ETIVE TROUT

*Recipe courtesy Chef Grant MacPherson,
Seafood Scotland Culinary Council*

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

INGREDIENTS

- 8 oz Loch Etive Smoked Trout
- 4 ea. portabella mushrooms, quartered
- 2 cups mixed greens
- ½ cup sliced radish
- 8 ea. 2-inch asparagus tips, blanched
- ½ cup crème fraîche

- 1 tsp lemon juice
- 1 T mint, chopped
- 1 tsp thyme, chopped
- 1 T lemon oil
- 1 T oil
- Salt and pepper

METHOD

1. Combine the crème fraîche, lemon, and mint in a bowl and season with salt. Place in refrigerator to chill.
2. Toss the portabella mushrooms with the oil, and thyme, then season with salt and pepper. Heat a nonstick pan over high heat and sauté the

- mushrooms until they form a light golden-brown crust on both sides. Remove from the heat.
- 3. Toss the mixed greens with the lemon oil.

ASSEMBLY

Dallop 2 tablespoons of the mint crème fraîche off center of each plate. Layer two ounces of the smoked trout and lean 4 pieces of the cooked portabella mushrooms on the trout. Loosely set ½ cup of the tossed greens next to the mushrooms and garnish with 2 asparagus tips and a few radish slices.





OCEANIC 'LOOKING GLASS' SEA BASS

Recipe courtesy McCormick for Chefs

YIELD: 4 SERVINGS

A clear agar agar seasoning sheet loaded with fresh lemon zest and juice, garlic, ginger, black pepper, and toasted sesame seeds is as delicious as it is beautiful for seasoning poached cod, halibut, and sea bass.

INGREDIENTS FOR OCEANIC LOOKING GLASS

- 5 oz water
- ½ tsp agar agar powder
- 1½ tsp fresh lemon juice
- ¾ tsp lemon zest, fresh
- ¾ tsp garlic, minced
- ¾ tsp white sesame seeds, toasted
- ¾ tsp ginger, minced



- ¾ tsp toasted sesame oil
- ¾ tsp black pepper, course grind
- ¾ tsp kosher salt
- 1½ tsp Dulse Seaweed, hydrated and minced

METHOD

1. In a heavy bottom saucepan, whisk water and agar agar together and heat while whisking to a simmer. Bubbles will form on the bottom of the pan. Lower heat and stir with a rubber spatula until mixture becomes clear, just a minute or two. Remove from heat and continue to stir.
2. In a bowl, combine lemon juice and zest, garlic, sesame seeds, ginger, oil, pepper, and salt. Mix well.
3. Add warm water thickened with agar agar to the other ingredients and whisk well to combine. Allow it to cool slightly

but not under about 95°F, at which point it will gel. Add Dulse Seaweed and mix to combine.

4. Lay a sheet of plastic wrap over a parchment-lined sheet tray. Use a tablespoon to mix all ingredients. Pour 1½ tablespoon mixture over a portion of plastic wrap that is about the size of fish portion to be seasoned. It will gel in 5 to 10 minutes or faster if refrigerated. Cut the wrap between portions of gel and leave the gel on plastic.

INGREDIENTS FOR SEA BASS

- 4 ea. sea bass (5 oz portions)
- 2 cups seafood broth, hot and simmering
- 6 cups seaweed, rehydrated
- ½ cup edamame peas, blanched

METHOD

1. In a heavy bottom pot, bring stock to a boil and reduce to just below a simmer. Add fish and adjust temperature of stock to 140°F to 145°F. Poach until fish is cooked and flaky.
2. In a heated serving bowl, arrange 1½ cups seaweed as desired and sprinkle with 2 tablespoons edamame peas.
3. Remove fish from poaching stock and immediately invert the gel on plastic over the fish and gently peel back the plastic. Pour ½ cup of hot stock over prepared dish and plate fish over seaweed. Drizzle an additional tablespoon of hot stock over agar agar sheets and serve immediately.

BRAZILIAN FISH STEW

Recipe courtesy Forever Oceans

INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb Forever Oceans™ Yellowtail (or your favorite fish), skin removed, flesh cut into 2-inch pieces
- Freshly ground black pepper
- 1 ea. lime, zest and juice
- 2 T coconut oil or olive oil
- 2 ea. carrots, washed and roughly chopped
- 1 ea. onion, peeled and roughly chopped
- 1 ea. red bell pepper, seeds removed and flesh roughly chopped
- 2 garlic cloves, peeled and minced
- 1 ea. medium sized jalapeño pepper, seeds removed and flesh minced
- 2 T tomato paste
- 1 can (15.5 oz) of chopped tomatoes
- 1 can (13.5 oz) of coconut milk
- 2 T cilantro, freshly chopped

METHOD

1. Place the fish into a medium size bowl. Season with salt, pepper, and zest and juice from half of the lime. Set aside.
2. Take a large frying pan and place over a medium to high heat on the stove. Add the oil, when hot add the carrots and onions,

cook 2 to 3 minutes. Turn the heat down to a medium and add the bell pepper, garlic and jalapeño and cook for an additional 4 to 5 minutes.

3. Add the tomato paste, chopped tomatoes and coconut milk, stir and bring to a simmer, then cook for 10 minutes to slightly

thicken the stew. Then carefully add the fish, cover with a lid and simmer for 6 to 7 minutes or until the fish is cooked.

4. Taste and adjust the seasoning with extra salt and the remaining lime juice if needed. Sprinkle over the freshly chopped cilantro and serve with cooked rice.



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Are You Setting Up Your Team to Thrive?

Caterers and hospitality companies are struggling to fill open positions across the country. It continues to be the biggest limiting factor in the recovery from the lasting impacts of COVID and the ability to thrive on the other side.

People are clearly ready to celebrate again, and demand is surging for events, weddings, parties, and conferences. I am continually hearing that caterers are having to turn away business because they simply don't have enough people to keep up with the demand. This is a very difficult scenario to navigate, and it exposes companies to the potential of poor decision making. Here are four things to keep in mind to help you avoid that trap and find long term success.

Avoid quick hires

It's tempting to fill openings quickly with the first candidate that actually shows up for an interview. While it fills an immediate need, it's not the best strategy for building a great team. Taking a little extra time to ensure a candidate has the right skills for the position and is a good cultural fit will save significant time, money, and energy in the long run. The number one reason for employee turnover is bad hiring decisions and this can be mitigated by building out an interview process, putting candidates through that process, and trusting that you are hiring the best candidates—especially for senior level positions.

Onboarding & integration

The “sink or swim” approach for new hires is a dangerous way to

go. When you decide to bring new people onto your team, you have to invest in a robust onboarding experience. Gallup has found that only 12% of employees feel that their company does a good job of onboarding new team members. New hires are much more likely to find long term success when they go through an in-depth onboarding experience that includes opportunities to get to know their fellow team members; spending time with personnel from the executive team; gaining a clear understanding of expectations; receiving proper training for the position; and getting immersed in the culture of the organization. Investing in this can be daunting when we have so many other pressing needs on our plate, but it's critical for the overall health of the team and retention of those new hires.

“WHEN EVALUATING YOUR CURRENT TEAM MEMBERS, IT'S IMPORTANT TO MAKE SURE THAT THEY ARE IN POSITIONS WHERE THEY ARE USING THEIR NATURAL STRENGTHS 80 TO 90% OF THE TIME.

Do your people have alignment in their positions?


When evaluating your current team members, it's important to make sure that they are in positions where they are using their natural strengths 80 to 90% of the time. We all have unique skills, talents, and attributes and when we get to showcase those abilities in the job we are doing, it leads to increased confidence, higher engagement, more productivity, and overall fulfillment in our work. As leaders, we have a responsibility to make sure our people are in positions where they can do just that or we risk losing them to fatigue and burnout. Many times, I see companies get stuck trying to make someone fit into an existing job description. If that job has three key responsibilities and the employee is really great at two of those three—but struggling with the third—we will likely spend most of our time addressing why they are not meeting expectations with the third component. This takes us down a path that is not motivating and doesn't feel good for either party despite the fact that they are doing really well in those other two areas. Companies that choose to be flexible with responsibilities have the ability to modify positions to best suit the needs of individuals and garner more alignment within the organization. In the case above the third component is removed from the person's responsibilities and replaced with something else that better suits that person's talents. This may not be possible for every position; however, if we are open to the conversation, we

can reduce turnover by ensuring job performance and satisfaction. This also broadens the candidate pool when hiring because we put less emphasis on the perfect fit for the job, and more emphasis on looking for the perfect fit for the organization.

Are you holding on to bad apples?

When it seems that everyone on your team is stretched thin and you're having trouble with hiring, it's almost unfathomable to think about letting someone go. This creates a problem for many organizations. We begin to tolerate behavior that is out of line with the core values of the company and allow toxic employees to stay on our teams for longer than they should. While we think we are helping our teams by not creating another vacancy in the organization, we are actually doing them a disservice by keeping the bad apples. A lot of times these are high performing individuals who are really good at their job, and they make sure everyone knows how good they are at their job by reminding people that no one else can do what they do, and how the company wouldn't survive without them. We start to believe them and worry that

they are irreplaceable, but behind the scenes they are doing more damage to the fabric of our companies than we can see. In order to protect their ego, they will blame others when things go wrong, participate in gossip behind people's back, and pit team members against one another. They will undermine efforts to improve the culture by pointing out to others why new initiatives won't work and garner support among other nay-sayers that will hold the organization back. I've made this mistake before and every time I've eventually followed through on the tough decision to let them go, we've replaced them with someone who is even better at the job. Don't let the anticipated fear of losing a key team member get in the way of removing people who are not great cultural fits.

A lot is at stake right now and leaders need to evaluate their teams for both the challenges of the upcoming months and the long-term prospects of the company. If you commit to an in-depth hiring process, invest in a solid onboarding experience, help your people find more alignment in their jobs and weed out the bad apples, you will set your organization up for success for many years to come. 



Anthony Lambatos is melding the historic Footers name with new and exciting trends in catering. He grew up in the business, from scraping plates for his dad, founder of **Footers Catering** Jimmy Lambatos, to hosting his own concession stand at Parade of Homes in High School. He has worked full time for Footers Catering since 2004 as Vice President and became Co-Owner and CEO at the beginning of 2010. Anthony is passionate about taking the knowledge he has learned from his father and putting a fresh spin on it.



COUPLES ARE AS
INTERNATIONALLY-INSPIRED
SUCH AS PHO, TACOS, AND
MARCIA SELDEN CATERING AND
SERVES COMPLEX DISHES LIKE
PAELLA, INDIAN CURRY D
ARTFUL ITALIAN CRUDO. PHOTO
INTERNATIONAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION

Sourcing Fresh Seasonal Inspiration for Summertime Weddings

As a caterer living and breathing the events industry, you've probably noticed the tremendous uptick in summer weddings this year. There's a reason for that. *The Knot* reported that 2022 will be a record-breaking year for weddings, with over 2.6 million on the books. That's an estimated one billion meals served and a whole lot of craft cocktails. These numbers have only been seen historically one time prior, in 1984. With the number of weddings postponed during the pandemic, plus the new demand to celebrate love after years apart, it makes sense!

Since it will be the busiest season most caterers have had in years, how do you prepare? Or, how do you land new business that will exceed your projections to make up lost pandemic revenues? It should come as no surprise that the answer is creativity.

During a recent ICA monthly roundtable discussion, Lee Ann Kelly, VP of Sales, Marketing, and Sourcing for American Metalcraft, joined Jeffrey Selden, Managing Partner of Marcia Selden Catering and Events, and Robin Selden, Managing Partner and Executive Chef of Marcia Selden Catering and Events. Together, they shared the top trends they see for summertime weddings. There's no shortage of creativity in these plates; take notes!

Artistic small plates

Small plates in their own right aren't a trend. But they're ever-evolving, so designing them in a way that incorporates a unique presentation is trendy! You can easily use trendy vessels like mini angled round melamine bowls or stainless-steel double wall bowls for cold treats like berries and ice cream.

Marcia Selden Catering and Events has been offering desserts in the form of an



MOST COUPLES ARE FEATURING A SIMPLE SIGNATURE COCKTAIL FOR GUESTS THAT OFFERS A POP OF COLOR AND JUICY BOTANICALS TO THEIR BAR SERVICE. PHOTO COURTESY INTERNATIONAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION

amuse-bouche, typically reserved for pre-dinner or between courses. These bite-sized desserts are essentially mini versions of their larger desserts, but are a hit for couples and guests. Another popular year-round option is the chicken and waffles with slaw and a pipette of sriracha syrup served in a carbon steel vessel.

Garden grab & go

There's definitely a push for healthier options at weddings. (Or, if they're not healthier, at least they incorporate fresh local vegetables and fruits in the mix!) Fun ideas

HEALTHIER OPTIONS (THAT INCORPORATE FRESH LOCAL VEGETABLES AND FRUIT) ARE IN DEMAND FOR WEDDINGS. IDEAS CAN INCLUDE CHARCUTERIE AND CRUDITÉ IN MINI MELAMINE POTS FOR A GARDEN VIBE OR A PEACH CAPRESE SALAD IN A MELAMINE "CAST IRON" SKILLET. PHOTO COURTESY INTERNATIONAL CATERERS ASSOCIATION

ASKING FOR
ED DISHES,
WONTONS.
ND EVENTS
E SPANISH
ISHES, OR
COURTESY
OCIATION



could be charcuterie and crudité in mini melamine pots for a garden vibe or a peach Caprese salad in a melamine "cast iron" skillet.

Go global

Dinnertime for weddings and events doesn't necessarily mean steak and potatoes. Couples are asking for more internationally-inspired dishes every season. In fact, this year, American Metalcraft's number one selling new item was noodle bowls. Pho, anyone?

Marcia Selden Catering and Events serves complex dishes like Spanish

paella, Indian curry dishes, or artful Italian crudo. It's time to get more authentic to the cultures and flavors that clients love and connect with!

Time to cheers

Most couples are featuring a simple signature cocktail for guests that offers a pop of color and juicy botanicals to their bar service. The simpler, the better. Feature only three to four ingredients to let the organic flavors shine vibrantly. A few cocktails that couples working with Marcia Selden Catering and Events love include:

SPIKED BERRY LEMONADE


There's nothing more refreshing than a summertime lemonade! This cocktail features lemonade spiked with vodka mixed with blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, and mint.

BLACKBERRY BOURBON SMASH

This favorite features bourbon, simple syrup muddled with blackberries, and the secret ingredient—a small drop of mint oil.

CUCUMBER COOLER

Guests are getting their greens more festively with this fresh favorite! You'll want to mix Hendrick's

cucumber gin with mint and lime and then employ a great upsell—a large globe-shaped ice cube—to seal the deal. Custom ice shapes continue to be all the rage to shake it up this season! 

Join the ICA for more seasonal catering inspiration, education opportunities, and peer collaboration

As a catering company helping a couple celebrate the most important day of their lives, you want to delight, entertain, and impress.

Each month, the ICA hosts educational roundtables like this to help inspire, brainstorm, and educate on industry trends. With a mission to help caterers learn, grow, and thrive, we aim to spark collaboration opportunities that can help every caterer succeed!

Marcia Selden Catering and Events is a proud member of the ICA. For more information on how to join the ICA and to be notified of future catering industry webinars, events and education opportunities, visit internationalcaterers.org.



DURING CONNECT LIVE, GUESTS ENJOYED PETITE LAMB CHOPS WITH GREEN OLIVE AND PINE NUT SALSA VERDE. PHOTO COURTESY BYC PHOTOGRAPHY



The Spark of Collaboration

Catersource + The Special Event
bring the fire to Anaheim



GASTRO GARAGE'S LIVE FIRE COOKING ENLIVENED THE TRADESHOW FLOOR.

(RIGHT) THE OPENING NIGHT PARTY INCLUDED A SILENT DISCO WHERE GUESTS DONNED INDIVIDUAL HEADPHONES AND DANCED THE NIGHT AWAY.

(BELOW) THE OPENING NIGHT PARTY INCLUDED A CHEF EXPERIENCE STATION FROM COLETTE'S CATERING AND EVENTS THAT FEATURED BAJA FISH TACOS (PURPLE FLOUR CORN TORTILLAS, SHREDDED CABBAGE SLAW, CREMA, CILANTRO LIME DRESSING, CHIPOTLE AIOLI, PICKLED RED ONION, AND COTIJA CHEESE); BRAISED SHORT RIBS (YUKON MASH, ROASTED SHALLOT, MICRO CHIVE); AND AN ELOTE BOWL (GRILLED ESQUITES, COTIJA, CREMA, AVOCADO, GARLIC AIOLI, CILANTRO, PICKLED ONIONS, GREEN ONION, TAJIN, HOT SAUCE, AND LIME).

All photos courtesy WASIO Photography unless otherwise noted. Kathleen Stoehr contributed to this piece.



The catering and events industry has faced a roller coaster of a year: calendars began to fill up as it appeared that COVID-19 was on its way out only to be thwarted by the Omicron variant. Supply chain issues and staffing shortages proved challenging as demand for events began to ascend record-setting levels. Despite everything, events are back,

and so is Catersource + The Special Event, held this past May in Anaheim for a week's worth of inspiration, creativity, learning, and showstopping experiences.

In the next few pages you will have the chance to relive the week, but first, we'd like to take this opportunity to not only thank this year's attendees for bringing their enthusiasm, but also express our sincere appreciation to our speakers, sponsors, and exhibitors for providing a top-notch experience.

ROY CHOI, WHO IS ONE OF THE ARCHITECTS OF THE MODERN FOOD TRUCK MOVEMENT THROUGH KOGI BBQ, WAS IN CONVERSATION WITH KATE PATAY DURING HIS CLOSING GENERAL SESSION. CHOI DISCUSSED FOOD TRUCKS, HIS EXPERIENCE WORKING IN CATERING AND HOTELS, AND SHARED SOME OF HIS FAVORITES: FOOD (RICE); SUPERHERO (BATMAN OR THE PUNISHER); KITCHEN GADGET (RICE COOKER).

Igniting the fire together



If a single word could be chosen to describe this year's Catersource + The Special Event, it would be collaboration.

"Everybody wants an experiential moment when it comes to an event, but it takes collaboration," said Michael Stavros (M Culinary Concepts) during *Caterers, Assemble!* – *Tantalizing Trends, Clever Concepts, Inspired Interactivity*. "It takes collaboration with your client, it takes collaboration with your vendors, it takes collaboration with your team."

"The worst possible thing we can do is exist in two separate silos," closing keynote speaker Roy Choi said, while referencing front of house and back of house staff. "We have to set each other up for success, and sometimes we need a safe space to argue it out. There can't be any more, 'this is my domain, this is your domain.' We're all together now and we need each other."

"The only way we can bounce back is to create a new environment for each other."

The idea of collaboration could be seen in myriad ways throughout the week: caterers and event planners presenting together, such as Robin Selden (Marcia Selden Catering &

Events) and David Beahm (David Beahm Experiences) co-presenting *Luxury is a State of Mind*; opening keynote Christina Matteucci's *I Know You're the Boss, But...*, which focused on the importance of a CEO's second in command; educational sessions that addressed relationships and partnerships such as Rob Barber's (ATOMIC) *Spare a Square? The Business Value of Collaboration* or Beth Bracco (Blue Plate Catering) and Ellyn Nugent's (Field Museum) session on *Building Successful Partnerships Between Venue Partners & Caterers*. One of this year's sessions even saw caterers and event planners bond over their shared experiences to shed light on the many challenges of today's hospitality industry with *A Candid Conversation LIVE on Mental Illness in the Event Industry*.

Collaboration is so much more than education, however. One of the biggest takeaways from a conference such as Catersource + The Special Event is the many networking opportunities and connections that are made with people who can become longtime collaborators and friends.

"We've been apart for such a long time," said Kathleen Stoehr (Director of Community & Content Strategy for Informa Connect) during this year's welcome session. "Some of the best take-aways are going to be because you met someone here."



(TOP) CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT SPEAKER DEBORAH ELIAS' (ELIAS EVENTS) EXCITEMENT WAS PALPABLE DURING THE ACE AND GALA AWARD CEREMONY, WHERE HER "A SPOOKTACULAR NIGHT" WAS NAMED BEST EVENT FOR A PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL: BUDGET UNDER \$1,000 PER GUEST.

(BELOW) CHRISTINA MATTEUCCI (DAVID BEAHM EXPERIENCES) SPOKE ON THE VALUE OF BEING A "NUMBER TWO" IN BUSINESS DURING THE OPENING GENERAL SESSION.

New lessons

Attendees were so excited to learn and expand their knowledge this year that they were quite literally climbing over each other.

During the *Plating Master Series*, instructors (Jason Sutton, Roy Porter, Greg Shapiro, Keith Lord, Ron Knoll and Bryce Cherven) helped coach attendees on technique, method, speed, and efficiency for plating. Everyone was so eager to see the plating techniques in action, that they were bobbing and weaving around each other to get a better view (especially since the room was packed to capacity).

There's been a lot of discussion about diversity and inclusion in recent years, but one facet of that discussion that often gets under-recognized is dietary restrictions. Feeding everyone at an event has become increasingly difficult

recently with so many more dietary preferences and food allergies.

"This needs to be discussed more," said Tracy Stuckrath (thrive! meetings & events). "We have a duty of care for providing safety and wellness."

Stuckrath, who is considered the dietary needs expert, delivered a trio of sessions this year that addressed the need to feed everyone.



"When you design for the minority, you can accommodate the majority, you can feed the majority," she said. "You have to be deliberate."

The experts were also on hand for a quick one-on-one. The Certified Catering Consultants (CCC) offered free half-hour appointments on site where they were able to help address all catering-related challenges.



(CLOCKWISE) **TRACY STUCKRATH** (THRIVE! MEETINGS & EVENTS), WHO IS CONSIDERED THE DIETARY NEEDS EXPERT, DELIVERED A TRIO OF SESSIONS ON HOW TO NAVIGATE DIETARY PREFERENCES (DAIRY-FREE, GLUTEN-FREE, VEGAN, KETO, VEGETARIAN, KOSHER) AT EVENTS.

THERE'S ALWAYS SOMETHING NEW AND EXCITING TO BE FOUND AT THE BOOKSTORE.

DURING THE PLATING MASTER SERIES, INSTRUCTORS (JASON SUTTON, ROY PORTER, GREG SHAPIRO, KEITH LORD, RON KNOLL AND BRYCE CHERVEN) HELPED COACH ATTENDEES ON TECHNIQUE, METHOD, SPEED, AND EFFICIENCY FOR PLATING.

Industry accolades

The Achievement in Catered Events (ACE) awards ceremony made its long-awaited return this year at the Muckenthaler Cultural Center where catering excellence from the past two years was celebrated.

This year's ACE award recipients were: Instawork (Best Innovation); 24 Carrots Catering and Events (turn to page 22 for more on the event) for "Fandango! Alta California" (Best Off-Premise Catering); and Chartwells Higher Education for "A University Presidential Inauguration" (Best On-Premise Catering). Congratulations to all of this year's recipients! Submissions for the [2023 ACE Awards](#) is now open. Turn to page 33 in the adjoining *Special Events* magazine to view this year's Gala Award recipients.



ACE AND GALA AWARD NOMINEES ENJOYED A WELCOME COCKTAIL UPON ARRIVAL TO THE AWARDS CEREMONY.



INSTAWORK WAS SO THRILLED BY THEIR ACE WIN FOR BEST INNOVATION THAT THEY COULD BE SEEN SHOWING OFF THEIR TROPHY ON THE TRADESHOW FLOOR THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE WEEK.



24 CARROTS CATERING AND EVENTS RECEIVED THE ACE AWARD FOR BEST OFF-PREMISE CATERING FOR THEIR EVENT "FANDANGO! ALTA CALIFORNIA." CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT SHOW AMBASSADOR NORM BENNET ACCEPTED THE AWARD. TURN TO PAGE 22 FOR MORE ON 24 CARROTS' EVENT.



LENNY TALARICO (LENNY TALARICO PRODUCTIONS) AND DAVID MERRELL (AOO EVENTS) CELEBRATE THEIR GALA AWARD WINS FOLLOWING THE CEREMONY.

Leadership Lunch: A celebration of emotional intelligence in the workplace

EVENT CHAIR ANTHONY BOLOTTA



The 2022 Leadership Lunch celebrated three individuals—and one organization—that have made an impact on the catering and events industries.

Emotional acceptance speeches touched on loved ones who supported careers, celebrated the spirit of volunteerism,

and spoke to the resilience of an industry that banded together to get back to business. Wrapped around a theme of emotional intelligence, the event, chaired by Anthony Bolotta (Bolotta Entertainment) concluded with a program presented by Mike Lee and Carl Winston.

A three-course lunch prepared by the 24 Carrots team (and delivered to each table with its signature synchronized service), was themed appropriately with names befitting the event's theme.



THE EVENT CONCLUDED WITH
A PROGRAM ON EMOTIONAL
INTELLIGENCE, PRESENTED BY MIKE
LEE AND CARL WINSTON.

Orlando or Bust

Registration will open soon for Catersource + The Special Event co-located conference in Orlando, Fla., March 27–30, 2023. Check conference.catersource.com for the latest on speakers, sessions, and events.

catersource + **THE SPECIAL EVENT**

MARCH 27-30, 2023



CONNER BLACK (FOOTERS CATERING) PUTS THE FINISHING TOUCHES ON HIS BITES DURING THE DICED COMPETITION.

The culinary experiences

What's a Catersource + The Special Event without the food?

“Food brings people together,” Choi said. “Food has been an incredible source of culture.”

This year's conference offered a stellar lineup of culinary-focused sessions including: *Superstar Short Plates* (Joanne Purnell and Jennie Cook); *Creating Catering Experiences* (Leilani Baugh); *Mimics & Mishaps: Churros A La Mickey & Other Catering Magic* (Nettie Frank); *No Pastry Chef? No Problem* (Robert Mitchell and Deanna Johnson); and *Elevating Flavors Through Presentation* (Cristian Hernandez and Rich Rosendale).

“Everything I am as a chef began in catering,” Choi said. “If I wasn't a banquet chef, I don't think Kogi (Choi's iconic Los Angeles taco truck) would have happened.”

The food didn't stop there either. Between sampling on the Tradeshow floor, the lunchtime Food Truck Roundup, the delicious bites during the evening Showcasing Events, nobody went hungry—which is certainly a good thing because attendees couldn't help but be hungry after witnessing Boris Seymore construct a stunner of a buffet during *Upsell Your Event with Bespoke Buffets* or admiring the awe-inspiring grazing boards during *How to*

Create Grazing Boards That Will Dazzle Your Clients & Their Guests (turn to page 10 for more on that).

Chefs also put their pedal to the metal again this year for the annual DICED competition where chefs were challenged to create both a savory and sweet bite inspired by one of the four seasons. This year's judges (Christina Matteucci, Chris Taylor and DuVal Warner) selected spring for their season. Robin Selden served as emcee.

“I want fresh, bright flavors that are tantalizing and yummy,” Matteucci said.

This year's mystery boxes (whose ingredients each chef had to use in some capacity) included Boursin IQF cheese, One World Beef's beef ribeye and beef tallow, General Mills' vegan, dairy-free vanilla yogurt and Fresh Origin micro greens.

Ultimately, the coveted DICED trophy (and a \$1,500 Amazon gift card) went to Chef Mike Bicocchi with Elegant Affairs Caterers for his springtime bites: beef tartare with radish, watermelon, pickled carrots and zucchini; and watermelon cup with cheese, yogurt, honey, and pistachio). “You hit the nail on the head for the season,” said one of the judges.

The crowd favorite award (a \$500 Amazon gift card) went to Connor Black (Footers Catering) who created a mini gyro bite and a brûlée watermelon bite.



THERE WAS NO SHORTAGE OF SAMPLING ON THE TRADESHOW FLOOR THIS YEAR. US FOODS OFFERED UP **BLOODY MARY SHOOTERS**.



MIKE BICOCCHI (ELEGANT AFFAIRS CATERERS) TOOK HOME THIS YEAR'S DICED TROPHY. HIS SWEET BITE WAS COMPRISED OF A WATERMELON CUP FILLED WITH A CHEESE AND YOGURT FILLING ACCOMPANIED BY CRUSHED PISTACHIOS AND MICRO FLOWERS.



JEANELLE POWERY (CHOCTAW CASINO & RESORT) REMAINS LASER FOCUSED DURING THE DICED COMPETITION.



(LEFT) ATTENDEES DEFINITELY DIDN'T GO HUNGRY ON THE TRADESHOW FLOOR THIS YEAR WITH SO MANY SAMPLES AVAILABLE. SHOWN HERE IS KING'S HAWAIIAN.

(BELOW) MIKE BICOCCHI'S SAVORY BITE WAS A "WATERMELON RADISH PINCH" COMPRISED OF BEEF TARTARE, SOY SAUCE, RED ONION, PICKLED CARROT AND ZUCCHINI, AND SOME MICRO SWEET HERBS.





LIVE ARTIST DEMONSTRATIONS FROM PAINT YOUR EVENT AND THE ORIGINAL BUTT SKETCH WERE A NICE ADDITION TO THIS YEAR'S CONFERENCE.

Surprises abound

There were plenty of surprises around every corner throughout the week, including the Tradeshow floor.

Myriad new products could be found to inspire and excite attendees on the combined Catersource + The Special Event Tradeshow floor. Everything from food products to rental equipment to décor to entertainment to technology solutions were on hand to prepare attendees for the onslaught as events return once again.

Jordan Langer (Non Plus Ultra) surprised and delighted attendees during his session on the Ignite Stage (*The Future of Events: Innovative Lessons from the Frontlines of the Immersive Event & Entertainment Boom*) with a mariachi band, guacamole station, and margarita bar (in honor of Cinco de Mayo).

On conference stages, Stella Rankin made a statement in her session *Memorable Experiences Through Re-Imagined Catering* by donning a wedding dress and not talking about the “elephant in the room” (a special guest wearing an elephant costume). And after so many successful years at Catersource + The Special Event, David Merrell continues to surprise us, this year via an onstage healing ceremony with the help of Five Sense Collective.



IT'S NOT EVERY DAY YOU EXPECT TO SEE A FURRY FRIEND ON THE TRADESHOW FLOOR.

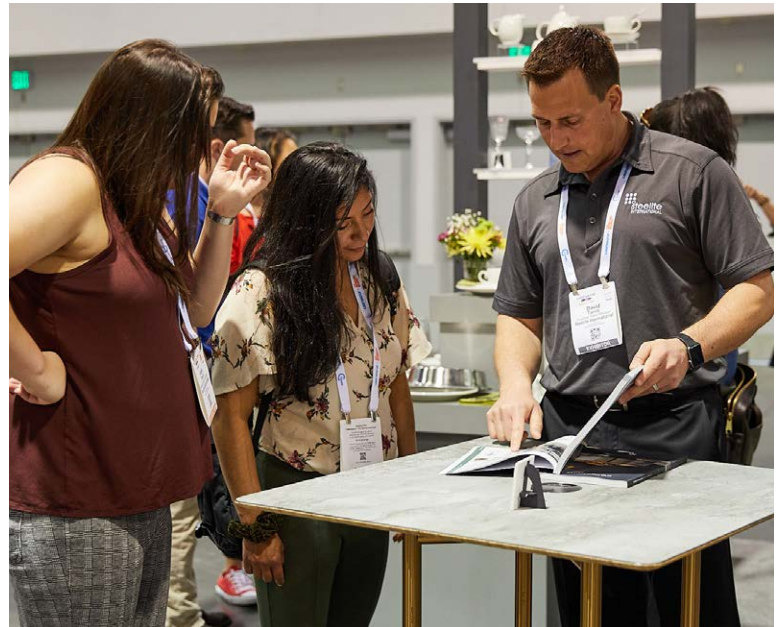


(ABOVE) **THE MANDALORIAN AND BABY YODA** MADE A SURPRISE APPEARANCE ON THE TRADESHOW FLOOR.

(LEFT) **THE MYSTERY TATTOO BOOTH** ALLOWED ATTENDEES TO RECEIVE SURPRISE AIRBRUSH TATTOOS.



(ABOVE) **FIVE SENSE COLLECTIVE** DELIVERED AN ONSTAGE CLEANSE DURING **DAVID MERRELL'S SIGNATURE SESSION**. THE SACRED HEALING CEREMONY AIMED TO PROVIDE A SPACE FOR INDIVIDUALS TO HEAL, GROW, AND SELF-EXPLORE THROUGH DEEPER, MORE MEANINGFUL CONSCIOUSNESS. PHOTO COURTESY CATERSOURCE MAGAZINE



(ABOVE AND LEFT) THERE WERE PLENTY OF SURPRISING NEW PRODUCTS TO INSPIRE AND EXCITE ATTENDEES ON THE COMBINED CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT TRADESHOW FLOOR TO HELP THEM TRANSITION THEIR BUSINESSES INTO THE NEXT PHASE.




California-style celebrations

As with any good Catersource + The Special Event, nothing is complete without evening events.

The week kicked off with Connect Live on Monday evening; a California showcase at its finest, complete with California wine country, Beverly Hills designers, and beach vibes.

Following the ACE Awards, the Muckenthaler Cultural Center offered lots of opportunities to celebrate during the Opening Night Party with libations, food, and entertainment to keep the party going.

Music and entertainment were the name of the game during the Event Experience at House of Blues Anaheim, and the week was capped off on Thursday with the Closing Night Celebration, which was a journey through the decades (turn to page 16 for more on that). 



OCEANIA (KEY ARTIST GROUP) WELCOMED GUESTS TO THE CLOSING NIGHT CELEBRATION.



(ABOVE) BEAUTIFUL SERVERS GAVE A TOUCH OF ELEGANCE TO CONNECT LIVE.



(ABOVE AND RIGHT) THROUGHOUT THE WEEK, PAINTILLIO OFFERED PARTY-GOERS THE OPPORTUNITY TO COMPLETE A COMMUNITY PAINT-BY-NUMBERS PROJECT.





THE OPENING NIGHT PARTY HAD PLENTY OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR A CELEBRATORY TOAST.



NEW AND OLD FRIENDS ALIKE HEATED UP THE DANCE FLOOR THROUGHOUT THE WEEK'S EVENING EVENTS.



More than Mickey

Orlando and neighboring Walt Disney World may be dubbed “the happiest place on earth.” No offense to Mickey Mouse, but the Orange County Convention Center may just take that title next year. **Catersource + The Special Event** will be held **March 27-30, 2023** at the OCCC. Trust us, you won’t want to miss it!



Be a part of Catersource + The Special Event 2023

CALL FOR SPEAKERS is now open for both Catersource Conference & Tradeshow and The Special Event, which will be co-located in Orlando, Fla. **March 27-30, 2023.** Go to conference.catersource.com for conference information, or cs2023.catersource-cfp.com to pitch a session topic.

catersource + **THE SPECIAL EVENT**

MARCH 27-30, 2023



You Don't Need a Laser Show to Run an Effective Sales Meeting

If your sales force is anything like most teams, when they realize it is time for the weekly sales meeting, they probably cringe. We have all sat through monotonous speakers with PowerPoint presentations that go on for slide after slide about updates, motivation, and the keys to success.

The problem is that a lot of the information obtained from these meetings is not entirely helpful when it is time for staff to go out to snag new jobs and contracts. While you do not need to go out and get celebrity guest stars, have a Pink Floyd laser show, or bribe everyone with free breakfast to show up, there are some things you can do to run an effective sales meeting, no matter how big or small the meeting may be.

Here comes the morning eye roll

It can be disconcerting to realize that much of what goes on during a sales meeting brings a sense of dread to those in attendance. Have you felt that way, too? The sales meeting does not have to be something that everyone tries to avoid, yet it happens week after week.

Why is there so much dread about sales meetings? More than likely it is because of things like:

- **The meeting is unorganized and lacks structure.** With no agenda it is hard for anyone to stay on point and focus.
- **Going off on tangents:** This happens frequently. Someone starts to discuss something that is completely unrelated to the central topic, and it completely derails the whole meeting for everyone.
- **Rehashing old items:** When you spend 20 minutes each week talking about the same things and never getting to the new information and topics, it can make the meeting unproductive for everyone involved.

How can you avoid these things from happening, while ensuring that your

sales force wants to have these meetings each week? There are some great solutions to help keep things on track and make these meetings productive, fun, and something the staff looks forward to.

Planning your meeting

There are a couple of basics you want to start with when planning your sales meeting. Keep in mind things like:

- **Start and end times:** Your sales force is likely working on a tight schedule. They have calls to make, clients to see, and contracts to handle. Make sure that the meeting has a start time that works well in everyone's schedule and has a definitive end time. Try to stick to both as best as possible.
- **Keep it timely:** While you certainly do not need to have a three-hour sales meeting each week, it needs to be more than 10 minutes if you want it to be productive. Set aside at least an hour for the meeting to give yourself time to cover everything. You do not want to spend time simply re-hashing the past weekend's event; your operations meeting can take care of that. Instead, make this hour about



information, teaching, inspiration, and ways to achieve goals.

- **Choose the right day:** Scheduling a meeting on Monday morning is the worst time for you and your sales staff. Everyone needs Monday to catch up after the weekend and they do not have the time or energy to devote to a meeting right away. Friday can be just as bad as everyone will be swamped with all that needs to be accomplished for weekend events. Pick a day in the middle of the week at a time when there might be a lull in the schedule.

Your sales meeting in four acts

You can break your meeting into four 15-minute blocks that will work well for everyone, keep the meeting moving, and make it productive. Try a setup such as:

- **Tracking:** Don't launch your sales meetings on a down note. You want to make the meetings a positive experience, so use the first 15 minutes to praise everyone for the numbers they achieved during the past week. Congratulate individuals for hitting and exceeding sales goals. Make it a big deal because, well, it is a big deal! A round of applause from the group is great for motivation. You can even use this time to distribute gift cards as recognition for great work. For those that may have missed their goals, now is not the time for chastising or reprimands. They know they missed the mark already and with the right motivation will strive to do better.
- **Opportunities:** There are sales opportunities all around, so devoting 15 minutes for everyone to share ideas and leads can be ideal. Have each person bring a sale that they want to focus on that week. It could be something like an advertisement about the new mall coming to the

area and how they want to go after the bid to handle the grand opening event. Or, maybe it is a gala they had bid on and did not get this year and want to go after it again. This is a good time to share that information.


- **Education:** Your sales meeting can also be a great teaching moment. Take 15 minutes to review different and effective sales techniques. Do some role playing so that the sales force can see how to work with different clients and situations; talk about how to build solid relationships and how to make a proposal; or teach the best way to work on closing a deal. The information learned here can be a big help to your team.
- **Wrapping Up:** Take the last 15 minutes to go around the table and let everyone say what the best takeaway from the meeting is for them. The key to doing this is that each person must say something different and not repeat someone else's answer. It will make everyone think about the meeting and what worked best for them. Additionally, they can get important points reinforced to them by others, which in turn helps them retain more information.

Your role in all this

Your role as facilitator is important. Make sure the meeting starts and ends on time each week no matter

what. If for some reason the meeting must be cancelled because of an event, make sure you reschedule it for that same week. If you cannot be there for some reason, have another staff member fill in as the facilitator. There may be times when a particular topic needs to run longer for greater emphasis; let the team know about it so they can adjust their schedules before the meeting.

It is your job as the leader to make sure the sales meeting is a good one each week. Encourage everyone to participate so the meeting is more productive for each person. You want your team to feel excited about going to the sales meeting each week and leave the meeting each week feeling inspired. Don't be afraid to assign homework for the next meeting so your staff can think about it and be ready for the next time. Once the meeting is over, arrange a time to meet with each salesperson one-on-one for about 15 minutes each. This gives each individual time to ask questions, get advice, talk about strategies for new business, tweak individual techniques, and go over their numbers.

Sales meetings do not have to be the groan-inducers or eye-rollers that everyone dreads going to. If you make the meetings purposeful, interesting, and inventive, everyone will be sure they can attend each week and the company will benefit overall. 



With 30 years of experience owning event planning, high-end catering, and design and décor companies, Meryl Snow is on a mission to help businesses get on their own path to success. As a Senior Consultant for **Certified Catering Consultants** and a **Senior Consultant & Sales Trainer** for **SnowStorm Solutions**, Meryl travels throughout North America training clients in the areas of sales, marketing, design, and branding. As a valued industry speaker, she speaks with groups from the heart with warmth and knowledge, and covers the funny side of life and business.



By Amber Kispert

Late Night Noshes

Chefs Jason Sutton (Footers Catering) and Jay Varga (The JDK Group) ideated 30 different late-night snacks at Catersource



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CHEFS JASON SUTTON (FOOTERS CATERING) AND **JAY VARGA** (THE JDK GROUP) SHOWCASED 30 FLAVORFUL AND FILLING LATE-NIGHT MENU IDEAS RANGING FROM SEVEN-LAYER DIP TO CHILI CHEESE DOGS DURING THEIR SESSION (LATE NIGHT NOSHES) ON THE CULINARY EXPERIENCE STAGE.

Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



BREAKFAST QUESADILLA WITH HOMEMADE GREEN CHILI.



The apps have been passed, the salad course served, the entrées plated, and the desserts devoured—but the culinary indulgence doesn’t end just there!

That’s where the late-night snacks come in.

During Catersource 2022 chefs Jason Sutton (Footers Catering) and Jay Varga (The JDK Group) showcased 30 flavorful and filling late-night menu ideas ranging from a seven-layer dip to chili cheese dogs during their session (*Late Night Noshes*) on the Culinary Experience stage.

“After the party, a late-night snack would be great,” Sutton said.

Late-night noshes can essentially be split into three categories:

Nostalgic eats

“It’s the food that reminds you of things you had as a kid,” Sutton said.

One example would be Footer’s Pepper-Rolly, which is essentially a throwback to Totino’s Pizza Rolls.

“That’s what we ate when we were kids,” Sutton said. “But our version beats the ‘ol pizza roll out of the freezer.”

Other examples could be:

- Five Layer Dip Cup, served with house made tortillas
- Individual mac & cheese
- Ramen

- Cheeseburger dumplings featuring ground sirloin, aged cheddar, caramelized onion, and cherrywood smoked bacon served with kimchi mayo
- Garlic parmesan carrot fries with a coriander dipping sauce

Sweet treats

“Sometimes after a long event, you still need to have a little extra sweet to keep you going,” Sutton said. Examples of late-night sweets could include:

- Liquid nitrogen ice cream
- Cast iron a la mode
- Cinnamon roll waffles with bacon and maple cream cheese frosting
- Dessert poke featuring cheesecake rice pudding, sweet pickled beets, dragon fruit, fresh kiwi, micro basil, mango sauce, and coconut macaroon chips
- Donut holes with Mexican chocolate sauce

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- **Sweet potato donuts** with spicy bourbon caramel
- **A candied bacon slider** with brie, apple raisin chutney, and cinnamon buns
- **Dessert grilled cheese**, featuring a grilled pound cake with espresso mascarpone and dark chocolate ganache. Another variation could be a grilled brioche toast with brie, blueberry compote, and maple drizzle.

Drunk foods


And lastly, it's the drunk favorites.

"What do you want to eat to soak it up?" Sutton said.

Ideas include:

- **Birria tacos**
- **Breakfast quesadillas** with homemade green chili
- **Chili cheese dogs** with pimento cheese, Cincinnati chili, and IPA mustard
- **Totchos**
- **Nashville hot chicken biscuit**, served with white cheddar and a bread-butter pickle
- **Walking tacos**
- **Bao buns**

Your clients will love having the extra touch of service of a warm Birria taco being made as guests hit the dance floor for the final few songs or churros being fried as they leave the venue to head home. Here are just a few of the recipes Varga and Sutton shared during their session.

Interested in checking out the session? You can watch their session by adding the on-demand package to your previous registration by [clicking here](#). 



CANDIED BACON SLIDERS

INGREDIENTS

Candied Bacon (recipe below)

Apple Raisin Chutney (recipe below)

6 oz spreadable brie

12 ea. slider-sized cinnamon rolls
(Pillsbury cinnamon rolls work perfect here if you don't want to make your own)

Ingredients for Candied Bacon
12 slices of applewood smoked bacon

½ cup brown sugar

½ tsp cayenne pepper

½ tsp ground Aleppo pepper

METHOD

1. Add the cayenne pepper and the Aleppo pepper to the brown sugar and mix completely
2. Lay your bacon out flat on a baking sheet and rub each piece of bacon with brown sugar mixture.
3. Bake at 350 degrees for 10 to 12 minutes

INGREDIENTS FOR APPLE RAISIN CHUTNEY

2 ea. Granny Smith apples, cored and diced

½ cup golden raisins

2 T shallots, diced

2 T brown sugar

2 T butter

METHOD

1. In a sauté pan, melt your butter on medium high heat and then add in your apples, raisins, shallots, and brown sugar.
2. Sauté for 10 to 12 minutes while making sure everything is mixed well. You want to make sure your apples are soft and caramelized.
3. Remove from heat and let cool completely before using.

ASSEMBLY

1. Cut cinnamon roll in half so you have a top bun and bottom bun
2. On the bottom bun, spread 0.5 oz of brie
3. Add 1 tbsp of Apple Raisin Chutney on top of the brie
4. Cut 1 piece of bacon in half and put both halves on top of the chutney
5. Top with the top bun



LIQUID NITROGEN VANILLA ICE CREAM

INGREDIENTS

- 5½ oz granulated sugar
- 108 g egg yolk
- 16 oz 2% milk
- 16½ oz heavy whipping cream
- 16½ oz pure vanilla extract
- 1 quart liquid nitrogen

METHOD

1. Pour heavy cream and milk into a heavy saucepan, place over medium-low heat, and heat until barely simmering, stirring frequently. Turn the heat down to low. Whisk together the egg yolks, sugar, and vanilla in a large bowl until thoroughly combined.
2. Slowly pour about ½ cup of hot cream mixture into the egg yolk mixture, whisking constantly. Repeat three times more, whisking thoroughly before adding each additional ½ cup of hot cream to the egg yolk mixture.
3. Pour the egg yolk mixture back into the saucepan with the remaining hot cream and whisk constantly over medium-low heat until the mixture thickens and will coat the back of a spoon, 5 to 8 minutes. Do not let mixture boil.

Photo courtesy WASIO Photography



PEPPERONI ROLL

INGREDIENTS

- 1 ea. pizza dough (recipe below)
- 16 oz mozzarella cheese
- 1 lb cream cheese
- 1 quart pepperoni, sliced
- 4 oz ranch dressing
- 1 pint pepperoncini, chopped
- 4 oz parmesan cheese, grated
- 1 ea. Aleppo pepper

METHOD

1. Roll out pizza dough and smear with cream cheese. Top with mozzarella and pepperoni. Roll dough like a cinnamon roll and slice.
2. Proof and bake.
3. Heat rolls. Top with a drizzle of ranch, pepperoncini, grated parmesan and Aleppo pepper

INGREDIENTS FOR PIZZA DOUGH

- 17½ oz bread flour
- 12 oz tap water
- 1/10 oz dry active yeast
- 3/7 oz kosher salt
- 3/5 oz pure clover honey
- 1/16 oz oregano leaves
- 1/16 oz cracked black pepper
- 1/16 oz garlic powder

METHOD

1. Combine water and yeast and allow it to dissolve.
2. Combine everything else and mix until elastic.

NITRO ICE CREAM IS A FUN AND EXPERIENTIAL SWEET TREAT FOR EVENTS. SO COOL CREAMERY WHIPPED UP SOME NITRO ICE CREAM DURING CATERSOURCE + THE SPECIAL EVENT'S OPENING NIGHT PARTY. Photo courtesy WASIO Photography





SHIITAKE MUSHROOM BAO BUN

INGREDIENTS

- 4 oz fresh cilantro
- 12–16 ea. bao buns, steamed
- Hoisin Shiitake Mushrooms (recipe below)
- Pickled Red Onion (recipe below)

INGREDIENTS FOR HOISIN

SHIITAKE MUSHROOMS

- ½ cup hoisin
- ½ cup tamari soy sauce
- ½ cup sesame oil
- 4 tsp honey
- 4 cups shiitake mushrooms, sliced
- ½ cup canola oil

METHOD

1. In a mixing bowl, combine hoisin sauce, soy sauce, sesame oil, and honey until fully incorporated. Set aside.
2. In a sauté pan over medium high heat, heat the canola oil and add in the shiitake mushrooms. Cook for 3 to 5 minutes or until slightly softened and brown.
3. Remove mushrooms and remove any water or oil left over from cooking. Add the mushrooms back to the pan and add in hoisin sauce mixture and cook for an additional 2 to 3 minutes.

INGREDIENTS FOR PICKLED RED ONION

- 2 ea. small to medium red onions, thinly sliced
- 2 cups white vinegar
- 2 cups water
- ½ cup granulated sugar
- 2 T kosher salt
- 2 garlic cloves, smashed
- 1 tsp pink peppercorns

METHOD

1. Place your thinly sliced onions, garlic, and peppercorns in a container large enough for pickling mixture to cover them and that also can be sealed.
2. In a saucepan, heat your water and white vinegar together until

it reaches a simmer. Then add in your salt and sugar and stir until completely dissolved.

3. Remove from heat and let cool just a little. You don't want your mixture to be too hot to cook the onions since they are so thinly sliced. Pour cooler mixture over the onions and make sure they are completely covered. Store in the refrigerator for at least one hour before using. The thinner the onion, the sooner they will be ready.

ASSEMBLY

1. If you don't have a traditional steaming basket for the bao buns, you can easily use a perforated pan or colander sitting above boiling water to get steam from. They should only take a couple of minutes to steam that way as well.
2. Open your Bao bun and put 1.5–2oz of mushrooms inside.
3. Next add in a pinch of red onions, about .125oz
4. Top and garnish with fresh cilantro.



BIRRIA TACOS

INGREDIENTS FOR CONSOMMÉ

- 2 lb beef chuck roast
- 1 lb bone-in beef short ribs
- 5 ea. dried ancho chiles
- 5 ea. dried Guajillo chiles
- 2 ea. dried Morita chiles
- 1 ea. whole cinnamon stick
- 1 T whole coriander seed
- 1 T black peppercorn
- 4 whole allspice berries
- 2 whole cloves
- 6 dried bay leaves
- 1 tsp Mexican oregano
- 1 ea. large yellow onion, chopped
- 4 ea. Roma tomatoes
- 8 cloves garlic
- ⅓ cup apple cider vinegar
- 8 cups water

METHOD

1. Season and sear the chuck roast and short ribs in a little olive oil and set to the side.
2. De-seed the chiles and toast in the same pan until likely smoked and set to the side.
3. Add in garlic and onions and sauté until translucent.
4. Combine all ingredients back together and braise for 8–10 hours at 225 degrees.
5. Remove the beef to chill and be shredded.
6. Strain the braising liquid which is now your consommé and season with salt, pepper, fresh diced onions and cilantro.

INGREDIENTS FOR TACOS

- 12 ea. corn tortillas
- 1 lb shredded queso Oaxaca
- Pickled red onion
- Sliced radish
- Fresh chopped cilantro
- Lime wedge
- Consommé
- Braised chuck roast
- Short ribs

METHOD

1. Warm the consommé and dip corn tortilla into the broth.
2. Lay the tortilla on a flat top pan with a bit of oil and top with shredded cheese and a pinch of braised beef.
3. Fold in half like a quesadilla and let toast on each side.
4. Garnish with pickled red onion, sliced radish, cilantro, and lime wedges.
5. Serve with consommé on the side.

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TAKE ONE FOR THE ROAD

WHENEVER A GUEST DEPARTS an event, leave them with something to remember. Gifting something special can instantly solidify your event's place in their memory, often for years afterward. At your next soiree, make sure to incorporate small take-away treats or gifts to distribute to guests as they walk out the door. The impact will surprise you. —*Amber Kispert*



▲ Customized hand sanitizers | **MB Events**

Photo courtesy Blushing Bride Studio

► Welcome bags | **Jaclyn Watson Events**

Photo courtesy JAG Studios





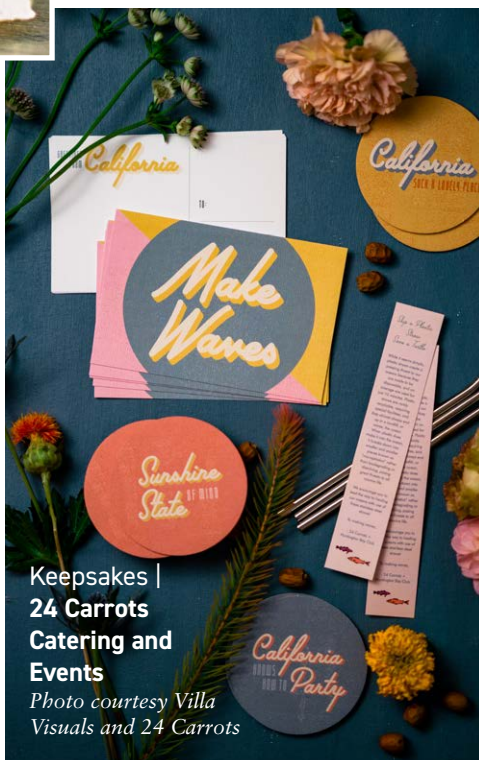
◀ Ice cream sandwiches | **Nightingale Ice Cream Sandwiches**
Photo courtesy Jen MacKay



Water bottles | **Foundation Supportworks**
Photo courtesy Mike Lucas



▲ Fleece blankets | **Jenna Brisson** Photo courtesy Jenna Brisson Photography



Keepsakes | **24 Carrots Catering and Events**
Photo courtesy Villa Visuals and 24 Carrots



▲ Homemade macarons | **Jaclyn Watson Events**
Photo courtesy Rodeo & Co

▼ Personalized ornaments | **Table 6 Productions** Photo courtesy Damon Tucci Photography



AS SEEN IN CHICAGO



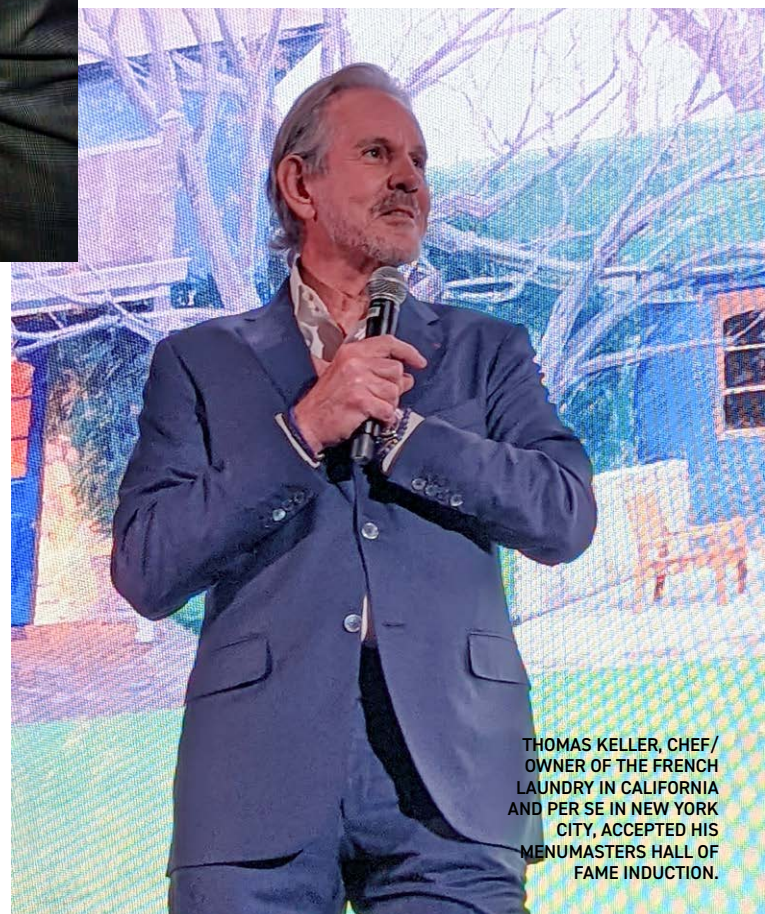
CHEESE & CHARCUTERIE BOARDS ARE TRENDING SOLIDLY, AS SEEN AT THE MENUMASTERS AFTERPARTY.




A STUNNINGLY DELICIOUS, SOFT AS BUTTER TANDOORI STEAK SHORT PLATE WITH MUNG JICAMA MANGO MINT SLAW FROM CHEF ROHINI DEY'S CHICAGO RESTAURANT, VERMILION.



A RED-WINE BRAISED SHORT RIB OMELET FROM FIRST WATCH'S CORPORATE CHEF, SHANE SCHAIBLY HIT ALL OF THE "BREAKFAST FOR DINNER" STYLE NOTES.



THOMAS KELLER, CHEF/OWNER OF THE FRENCH LAUNDRY IN CALIFORNIA AND PER SE IN NEW YORK CITY, ACCEPTED HIS MENUMASTERS HALL OF FAME INDUCTION.

On Saturday evening, May 21, our sister publication, *Nation's Restaurant News*, presented its Nation's Restaurant News MenuMasters Awards Celebration, sponsored by Ventura Foods, at the Drake Hotel in Chicago. With short plates, appetizers, and terrific libations to start, the evening progressed with awards, including the induction of Chef Thomas Keller into the MenuMasters Hall of Fame. An afterparty showcased delightful desserts and celebrated the event's 25th anniversary. 

—Kathleen Stoehr,
Photos courtesy Nation's Restaurant News

(RIGHT) WINNER OF "BEST NEW MENU ITEM" DURING THE EVENT, NOODLES & COMPANY PRESENTED TORTELLONI WITH ROASTED GARLIC CREAM SAUCE, AND PAIRED IT WITH OYSTER BAY SAUVIGNON BLANC.



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By Joanne Purnell



When Caterers Collaborate

A great chef brings the right ingredients together for a meal. A great catering company brings the right resources together for massive productions. Collaboration is something we do regularly at Good Gracious! Events. As a member of the International Caterers Association (ICA), we have forged amazing connections with other caterers across the world.

When we began to concept a vow renewal/birthday event taking place in several locations in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada, we reached out to our ICA friends at Culinary Capers Catering in Vancouver for help.

The weekend was themed as “Life is But a Dream.” The life and dream belong to two longtime private clients who contracted Good Gracious! Events to produce a weekend of events for 175 guests who would

be celebrating two very important occasions—the couple’s 50th wedding anniversary and the husband’s milestone birthday.

Collaboration on wheels

The weekend began in Seattle with a private five-star train ride to Vancouver. Working with the Amtrak culinary team, Good Gracious oversaw a gourmet meal. Working while moving (and from very small culinary quarters), we were guided by the train’s staff.

Arriving at Vancouver’s Union Station, guests were transported to the luxurious Pacific Rim Hotel for a Fourth of July celebration. There, Culinary Capers provided all beverages and food for the rooftop event overlooking Vancouver Bay.

We learned that by collaborating with Culinary Capers, we were far more efficient. They brought their knowledge of local resources to the event and peace of mind to us. We could rest easy knowing that they had assembled the best possible team, and it saved us a huge amount of trial-and-error time researching suppliers.

Collaboration in emergency


The next day, Van Dusen Botanical Gardens was center stage for the anniversary celebration which was dubbed “This Enchanted Evening.” With rain threatening, we once again were grateful for Culinary Capers. In a flash we were able to procure and install an array of pop-up tents over the tabletops. Thankfully, the skies cleared just as guests began to arrive. They enjoyed a lavish dinner produced by Culinary Capers Catering; we served as producers of the evening, which entailed a Broadway-style show and a lantern release over the water.

Collaboration in the field

Our last night was held on a private 300-acre island with limited resources. There, our third catering collaboration of the weekend awaited us. The client’s private chef would be our partner to produce the final goodbye barbecue.

Everyone was transported via seaplanes while our equipment and food were brought over on barges.

At this event, working with the client’s own private chef helped give us a stronger insight to plan our menus accordingly. Conversely, he learned much from our experience about the special ins and outs of catering from a remote kitchen—much different than from a home kitchen with a full staff!

Without a doubt, it was a weekend of collaboration from which we learned and grew as a team. We learned so much more than we ever could working alone. From fostering new resources and knowledge of a destination, to learning a new way to do something faster or better, there is no substitute for collaborating with our creative catering partners. 

Joanne Purnell is president of LA-based Good Gracious! Events.



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