

# catersource<sup>®</sup>

## 2022 State of the Industry



All Hail the Humble Potato {52}  
The Art of Staffing Post-Pandemic {60}  
25 Positive Predictions for 2022 {22}  
Taking on the 2022 Food Trends {40}

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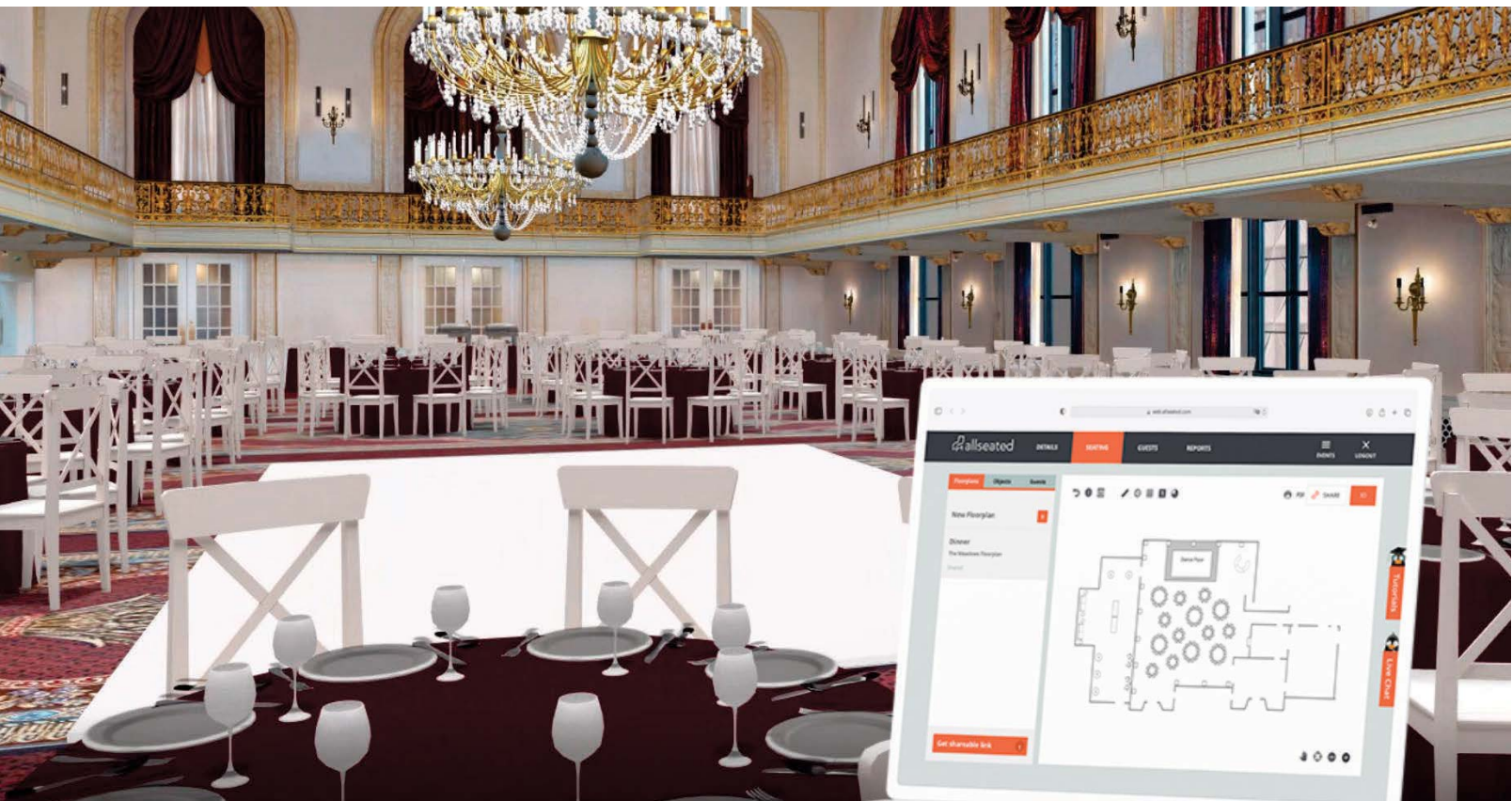
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VOLUME 19, NUMBER 4



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### Behind the Cover

In a year when the call for comfort food and plant-based cuisine was rising ever higher, the ever-popular potato stepped to the plate, showing its staying power. Turn to Page 52 for recipes and ideas. Head over to the Idaho Potato Commission website for this [Red, White & Blue Potato Stacks](#) recipe from Dan Azen.

Photo courtesy Idaho Potato Commission and recipe author Dan Azen

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## State of the Industry

I have spent the past 11 months of 2021 gathering anything and everything related to the recovery of our industry, so I could compile an incredible end of the year State of the Industry report for all of you. From the *New York Times* to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, to sessions presented at Catersource Conference & Tradeshow to webinar notes and blog posts, I have a folder full of ideas and also way too many voice memos to wade through.

What it boils down to is that no one can better speak to the state of the industry than all of you. Not me. I'm perhaps what one might call, the "eagle flying over"—I look at everything and absorb a lot and can talk on many a catering and events topic because of it. But, I'm not in the day-to-day thick of it as you all are.

Consequently, for this issue—while I have provided an overview feature that touches on the many areas of concern for all of us, I'm leaving it to the experts to dive a bit deeper. Wherever you see a SOI2022 logo throughout this book, know that I am leaving that nugget of industry knowledge to someone who is living it on the job every day.

For example, turn to page 60 for Anthony Lambatos, CEO of Footer's Catering in Denver, CO, for his take on cultivating and hiring staff. Go to page 48 for Michael Rosman, The Corporate Caterer, and learn how to rework your drop off menu offerings and prices. Take a fun twirl through contributing writer, Sue Pelletier's incredible 25 Predictions for 2022, beginning on page 22. (This piece was such a gas to read last year that we asked her to take another stab at it for 2022 with a new set of experts. Who knows—it might become an annual feature!)

And then, of course, we have supplemented SOI2022 with some great, focused pieces that will help you continue to grow your business past the heights it saw in 2019.

2021 was certainly a roller coaster ride, wasn't it?

From all of us here at *Catersource* magazine, conference, and tradeshow, we wish you a beautiful holiday season and, even better: the best year ever in 2022.

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Registration  
is Open!

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MAY 2-5, 2022 | ANAHEIM CONVENTION CENTER  
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by Kathleen Stoebr



# Conference updates

## CS/TSE 2022 event details

### CATERSOURCE CONFERENCE & TRADESHOW UPDATE

All systems go for a gathering in Anaheim, CA May 2–5, 2022! Catersource + The Special Event staffs are excited to provide you with the means to network, learn, and get excited by an industry once again on the upswing. Here is an update on all of the goings on.

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is open! Super Early Bird rates are in effect until February 2, 2022. Take advantage of the lowest prices available and enjoy exclusive access to webinars, virtual events, networking meetups, award nominee and session sneak peeks, and other exciting show-related niblets that only registered attendees can receive. If you want the inside scoop before the show so you arrive in the know, head over to <https://conference.catersource.com/pricing> to review pricing packages.

## catersource® MAY 2-5, 2022 | ANAHEIM, CA

**CALL FOR SPEAKERS:** Our Call for Speakers is closed and the full educational schedule will launch on February 2. Right now, go to [schedule.catersource.com](https://schedule.catersource.com) to view evening event information and a few of our premier sessions. We are excited to be able to bring you the best and brightest in live education!

**AWARDS COMPETITION:** The Catersource ACE and Special Events Gala awards nomination portal closes on January 15, 2022, so now is the time to get your catered events in! Nominees will be announced via a special broadcast toward the end of March; awards will be presented during Catersource + The Special Event.

Two new categories for suppliers and manufacturers have been added, as well as revamped categories for catering and events companies.

Here is a brief list of the Achievement in Catering Excellence categories:

## For catering & events companies:

### **On-Premise Catering East**

Catered events of any size or type in the eastern region, executed in the company's own venue. Live or virtual.

### **On-Premise Catering West**

Catered events of any size or type in the western region, executed in the company's own venue. Live or virtual.

### **Off-Premise Catering East**

Catered events of any size or type in the eastern region, executed in a venue or area owned by an entity other than the catering company. Live or virtual.

### **Off-Premise Catering West**

Catered events of any size in the western region, executed in a venue or area owned by an entity other than the catering company. Live or virtual.

### **Catering International**

Catered events of any size or type executed outside of the United States, either in a venue or area owned by an entity other than the catering company, or on the catering company's own property. Live or virtual.

### **NEW! Use of Space**

Celebrating creativity employed within unique spaces. This award will recognize a company that was able to "think outside the space" when adhering to social distancing restrictions, reworking a problematic or uniquely shaped or sized space, or implementing unique floor plans.

### **NEW! Technological Innovation**

Technology continues to aid in elevating events to new heights. Whether it's a fully virtual, hybrid, or in-person event, this award will recognize unique ways that technology has been incorporated,



## DICED competition

The annual Diced competition will be held on the Anaheim Convention Center tradeshow culinary stage on May 4, and we are currently seeking chefs to compete in this lively event. Six chef competitors will receive a mystery box of ingredients, a pantry of staples, and 30 minutes to complete a flight of three appetizers based on one of the

four seasons (we'll decide on the season on site!). *Winter, spring, summer or fall...all you've got to do is call...*

One thing that hasn't changed, however—a cash prize for the winner and one for the "audience favorite"! Email [kathleen.stoechr@informa.com](mailto:kathleen.stoechr@informa.com) for details or to express your interest in competing, or go to <http://conference.catersource.com>.

including video, audio, lighting, virtual reality, floor plans, and so much more.

### **NEW! Community Servant Award**

This award will recognize a company that has taken it upon themselves to help the greater community, incurring little financial gain. This can include, but is not limited to, feeding the less fortunate, providing meals for medical staff and first responders, volunteering or providing services at cost for non-profit fundraising, and aid to local hospitals or long-term care facilities.

### **NEW! Best Boxed or Plated or Contained**

This category will honor a caterer who has offered consistently beautiful solutions in to-go/socially distanced catering: boxed, bagged, bottled, or plated items for one, or many.

## For suppliers & manufacturers

### **NEW! Technological Innovation**

Never has it been more clear than now that technology has played a leading role in how we communicate

with each other, see each other, and work with each other. This award celebrates those who develop the software technology that assists caterers and event producers in putting their best business foot forward to satisfy a client's vision.

### **NEW! Product Innovation**

Celebrating an innovative product that has helped solve a problem for the catering and events industry. Examples include, but are not limited to, new sanitary and hygienic products, unique packaging, time saving products, and products that can be customized or personalized.

Eligible events run from September 30, 2019 to December 31, 2021 (extended due to the skipped awards show in 2021). Regular deadline is December 31, 2021 and late bird deadline is January 15, 2022. Nominees will be notified no later than end of March. Go to <http://conference.catersource.com> for information regarding entry. 



By Kathleen Stoehr



AN AERIAL VIEW OF THE RK GROUP'S 168,000 SQUARE-FOOT FACILITY IN SAN ANTONIO, TX.

# ENCAPSULATING 75 YEARS INTO ONE EVENT

**It was the most unlikely of places to hold an event.** The company headquarters. And no, we're not just referring to the tasting room. The RK Group held an event for Leading Caterers of America (LCA) members throughout their entire complex. The commissary, the storage areas, the 25-bay warehouse, the design studio, the parking lot.

Why? The RK Group, a one-stop event and hospitality company with 14 specialized divisions, including Rosemary's Catering, began its 75th year in business the week of November 11, 2021, and the LCA was there to help them celebrate.

Granted, this is a huge facility (168,000 square feet)—but that makes an event for 130+ even more difficult to pull off. Enormous facility, tiny guest list...how does one make every space look inviting and keep the group together? This was an event solution conundrum to beat all event solutions!

The menu drove the entire night, said Art Menchaca, Director of Business Development for The RK Group. "We showcased a menu that is influenced by the history of San Antonio and Texas, immersing the executives in many of our tried-and-true favorites over our 75-year history." As such, décor and stations reflected this culinary aesthetic.

"We started out the night with gorditas, sunset margaritas, and ice cold cervezas as the sun set over our city's skyline," said Menchaca.

The location? The parking lot, of course! A mariachi band, rope twirler, and a gigantic Texas longhorn named Vegas added to the experience.

Guests then migrated inside to view the "Experience" room. "This is the

first impression guests get as they arrive to our facility for a tasting or a consultation for their events," said Menchaca. In this room, guests enjoyed passed appetizers including Brisket Shishito Rellenos, Lobster Donut Holes, and Quail Bites while viewing various RK tablescapes and glass/china selections.

The kitchen offered two stations, a Grand Paella, and a Texas Tomahawk Taco station.

"They say everything is bigger in Texas," said Menchaca, "and this taco station features fresh made tortillas from our tortilla machine that makes up to 900 an hour. We also feature huge bone-in Ribeye Roast which are hand carved onto the warm tortillas and can be topped with an assortment of taco essentials."

At Uncle Ben's, a charming break area named after Rosemary's first establishment (a mom-and-pop Bar B-Q joint) and decorated with

All photos courtesy of The RKD Studio unless otherwise specified.





memorabilia, LCA members sat at tables and enjoyed avocado ice cream and three types of chili with all of the fixin's.

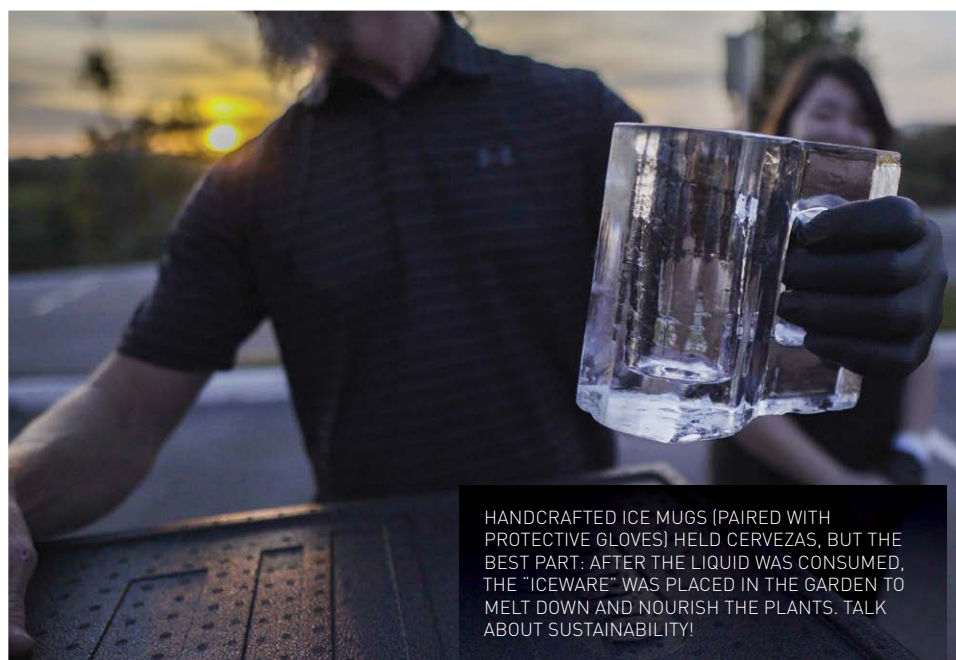
The 25-bay warehouse became a pop-up beach bar with a Slash & Burn Redfish station, and icy libations. "With almost 400 miles of coastline," said Menchaca, "Texas offers a variety of fresh seafood options that we often feature on our menus."

The event had many other stops and surprise/delights along the way, with large QR codes in front of each division entrance to provide context.

Tour completed and tummy full, guests returned outside to the parking lot and a gorgeous Texas evening, with bonfire pits blazing, full bar, music, an "Ice Fight" and a Kolache station, a food representing the rich history that the German and Czech immigrants brought to San Antonio. 



BIG TEXAS BOOTS AND A PHOTO OPPORTUNITY ON THE ADJACENT SADDLE MADE THIS AREA A POPULAR ONE WITH GUESTS.



HANDCRAFTED ICE MUGS (PAIRED WITH PROTECTIVE GLOVES) HELD CERVEZAS, BUT THE BEST PART: AFTER THE LIQUID WAS CONSUMED, THE "ICEWARE" WAS PLACED IN THE GARDEN TO MELT DOWN AND NOURISH THE PLANTS. TALK ABOUT SUSTAINABILITY!



## EVENT SOLUTIONS, CONT.



AS THE SUN SET OVER THE CITY'S SKYLINE, SUNSET MARGARITAS WERE SERVED, FEATURING A CHAMOY AND CHILI RIM WITH STRAW ENROBED IN ACHIOTE FOR EXTRA ZEST. NOTE IN THE BACKGROUND, VEGAS THE LONGHORN STEER POSES FOR HIS CLOSEUP.



A SPIRITED ICE CARVING COMPETITION CAPTIVATED GUESTS DURING THE LAST HOUR OF THE EVENT.



A 42-INCH WIDE PAELLA PAN HELD A SPECTACULAR ARRAY OF SEAFOOD, CHICKEN, PORK, AND VEGGIES COOKED WITH A FLAVORFUL SOFRITO AND SAFFRON-SCENTED RICE. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR

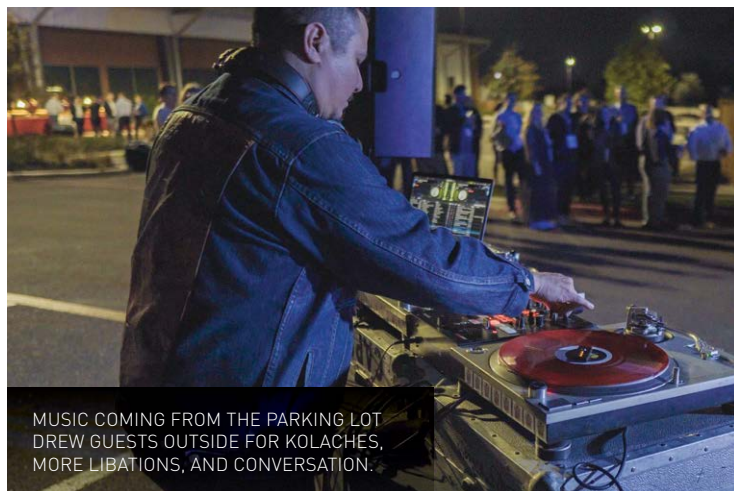




ROASTED SHISHITO PEPPERS WERE FILLED WITH HOUSE-SMOKED BRISKET, ASADERO CHEESE, AND CILANTRO.



AT THE SLASH AND BURN STATION, REDFISH WERE RUBBED WITH FRESH CITRUS AND SPICED DUST, THEN GARNISHED WITH GRILLED PINEAPPLE PICO DE GALLO AND MANGO CHUTNEY, SEA SALT AND VINEGAR FINGERLINGS, AND JICAMA SLAW.



MUSIC COMING FROM THE PARKING LOT DREW GUESTS OUTSIDE FOR KOLACHES, MORE LIBATIONS, AND CONVERSATION.



PUFFY, TOASTY TORTILLAS ROLLED OFF THE MACHINE AND INTO A WAITING PAN, TO BE GRABBED AS SOON AS A TOMAHAWK TACO WAS REQUESTED. OVER 900 TACO DISKS CAN BE MADE IN ONE HOUR. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR



THAT'S ONE GINORMOUS "STANDING RIB ROAST"!



IN THE RDK STUDIO, A "SCIENTIST" CONCOCTED LABORATORY TUBES FILLED WITH NAMES LIFTED FROM THE GRAPHIC DESIGN AESTHETIC, SUCH AS CMYK YELLOW AND INK BLOT STRAWBERRY WATERMELON.



*By Amber Kispert*

A close-up photograph of a hand squeezing an orange peel over a glass. The glass is filled with a reddish-orange liquid and ice. The background is dark and out of focus. The text "THROWBACK Tipples" is overlaid on the image in a white, serif font. The word "THROWBACK" is in all caps and smaller, while "Tipples" is in a larger, mixed case font.

# THROWBACK Tipples

*Classic three-ingredient cocktails  
never go out of style*





## DAIQUIRI

Year developed: 1896  
by Jennings Cox

Flavor profile: Complex rum flavors blend with lime and a touch of sweetness; ideal for outdoor summer gatherings

### INGREDIENTS

2 oz white rum  
1 oz fresh lime juice  
1 barspoon of superfine sugar

### METHOD

1. In a cocktail shaker add all ingredients.
2. Stir well to dissolve the sugar.
3. Add ice and shake.
4. Strain into chilled cocktail glass.

**T**he classic cocktail has experienced a renaissance over the past decade, while some may attribute it to the *Mad Men* craze of the mid-2000s, the real reason for the resurgence can most likely be linked to the bartenders.

“So much of what bartending is, is represented by [classic cocktails],” said Michael Neff from Houston’s Cottonmouth Club Cocktail Bar during *Tales of the Cocktail 2021*. “It’s a drink that contains our attitude because it’s a drink that contains our relationships.”

So, why have these so named “classics” stood the test of time?

For starters, most everyone knows the recipes.

“Classic cocktails for events are perfect for ease of service and quick service,” says Barbara Brass, Vice President of Los Angeles Catering Sales for Wolfgang Puck Catering. “And they also don’t require a mixologist-level skill when staffing bars for large events.”

Traditionally, many classic cocktails rely on minimal ingredients,

which allows for quick turnaround (perfect for the catering environment) and ample opportunity for experimentation.

“With more ingredients it is easier to make a mistake while rushing to get cocktails to everyone at a high-volume event,” says Igor Zukowiec with [Alchemiq Catering](#). “Three-ingredient cocktails are a win-win for both the client and the caterer!”

On the surface, classic cocktails may seem simplistic being there are so few ingredients. But that could not be further from the truth. In fact, many of these “simple cocktails” are where top bartenders shine because there’s very little room for error.

“If any cocktail can be ritualistic, it would be [the classics] because I don’t have anything to hide behind,” says Neff.

### *The holy trinity*

These enduring classic cocktails distilled down to their purest form comprise of just three ingredients in most cases, which oftentimes equates to a spirit, some sort of sweetener, and an additional liquor.



## OLD FASHIONED

Year developed: 1806 when The Balance, and Columbian Repository, an upscale New York newspaper, defined a cocktail as “a stimulating liquor, composed of spirits of any kind, sugar, water and bitters.”

Flavor profile: Equal parts sweet and smooth, offering a rich and silky mouth feel

### INGREDIENTS

2 oz bourbon whiskey  
1 tsp simple syrup  
2 dashes Angostura bitters  
Orange peel garnish

### METHOD

1. Build the whiskey, simple syrup, and bitters into a mixing glass with ice and stir.
2. Strain over fresh ice into an old-fashioned glass.
3. Twist the orange peel over the surface of the cocktail and then rub the rim of the glass with the before dropping in to serve.

“I can’t think of a better way to respect a really good booze,” said Alex Day from New York’s Death & Co during Tales of the Cocktail. “You’re drawing out these amazing qualities and giving them accent. Somehow they become something greater than the sum of their parts.”

But don’t expect the same three ingredients to equate to the exact same classic cocktail.

“There’s a hundred ways to do it right, and a thousand ways to do it wrong,” says Neff. “These cocktails have become a personal preference of the bartender, which is so emblematic of the cocktail movement in general.”

For example, while one bartender opts for simple syrup in their version of an Old Fashioned, another may be drawn to a sugar cube.

“It’s such a simple drink, but there’s such different opinions,” said Devon Tarby with Death & Co of the Old Fashioned. “But at the same time, the drink is so simple that there’s only so many places it can go. There’s not a whole lot you can innovate on, and I think that’s beautiful.”

Brass, however, has the opposite opinion.

“Classic cocktails lend themselves to so many different riffs,” she says, “so you can be creative.”

## Where skill meets style

Many bartenders agree, the classic cocktails are often where great bartenders are separated from the imposters.

“To me, the Old Fashioned has always been a statement of purpose from the bartender,” says Neff. “If you can’t make an Old Fashioned for me, I don’t care what else you can make.”

But why have classics become such a status symbol among bartenders?

“It’s not just about the ingredients, but about technique, the syrup consistency, what type of glass they’re served in, and what type of ice,” Day says. “A lot of those decisions are outside of what’s actually in the glass and it becomes a personal relationship with cocktails.”

Beyond what goes into the cocktail, how the cocktail is made has also become a signature of a great classic cocktail.

“This is the stuff of poetry,” says Day. “It’s the most beautiful little ballet.”

For many bartenders, it is a chance to demonstrate their prowess.

“What’s the point of me making this for you if I can’t show off while I’m making it?” Neff says. “I can make a different portrait with all of these beautiful things, and then I can also take something already beautiful and make something else beautiful out of it.”

And it also helps with consistency control.

“Three-ingredient cocktails are perfect for catered events because it is much easier to control consistency especially when the cocktails are not pre-batched, but made one by one,” Zukowicz said.

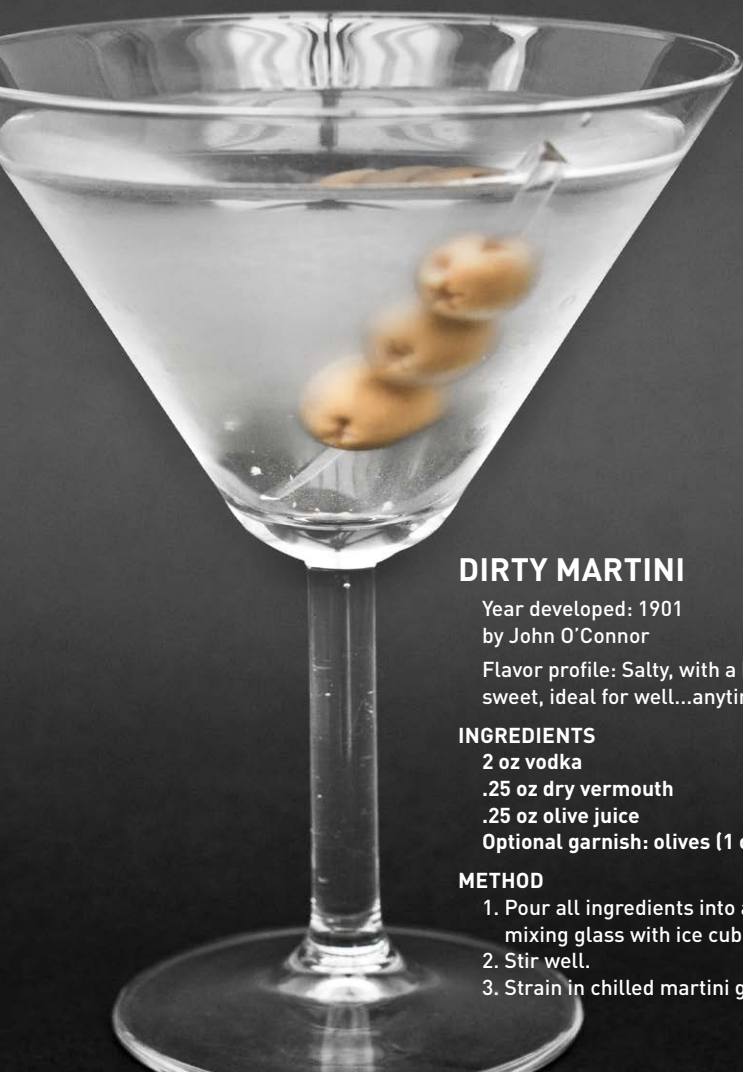
Cheers to these cocktails that will never go out of style.

“What’s fun about this modern era of cocktails that we’re in is that, yes there’s a lot of historical context and traditionalism, but there’s also a lot of pushing the boundaries and playing with formula and seeing if we can break it a little bit,” says Day. “The greater awareness and appreciation of cocktails in general means that the classics will always be there, they will be the starting point.”

Brass agrees.

“Trendy cocktails like trendy clothes and shoes come and go,” she says, “but you can always count on the classics.” **CS**





## DIRTY MARTINI

Year developed: 1901  
by John O'Connor

Flavor profile: Salty, with a hint of sweet, ideal for well...anytime.

### INGREDIENTS

2 oz vodka  
.25 oz dry vermouth  
.25 oz olive juice  
Optional garnish: olives (1 or 3)

### METHOD

1. Pour all ingredients into a mixing glass with ice cubes.
2. Stir well.
3. Strain in chilled martini glass.

## NEGRONI

Year developed: 1920 at Bar Casoni in Florence at the request of Count Camillo Negroni, who ordered an Americano with gin instead of club soda.

Flavor profile: A balance of bitter and sweet that gives off hints of herbs and the tang of juniper. Ideal for those with exceptionally developed palates

### INGREDIENTS

1 oz gin  
1 oz Campari  
1 oz sweet vermouth  
Orange slice garnish

### METHOD

1. Combine all the ingredients in a mixing glass filled with ice cubes.
2. Stir ingredients briefly to mix, cool and dilute slightly.
3. Strain the ingredients over an ice-filled old-fashioned glass and tuck in the slice of orange to garnish.



## MANHATTAN

Year developed: Early 1880s  
Dr. Iain Marshall

Flavor profile: Spirit-forward, slight bitterness, herbal undertones, ideal for warmth on cold nights

### INGREDIENTS

5 oz rye whiskey  
1 oz sweet vermouth  
2 dashes Angostura bitters

### METHOD

Combine all the ingredients in a mixing glass filled with ice and stir. Strain into a chilled cocktail glass. Garnish with a maraschino cherry.



## ALEXANDER

Year developed: 1922 by Henry McElhone

Flavor profile: Creamy, sweet, indulgent; ideal as a dessert cocktail

### INGREDIENTS

1 oz cognac  
1 oz crème de cacao  
1 oz fresh cream

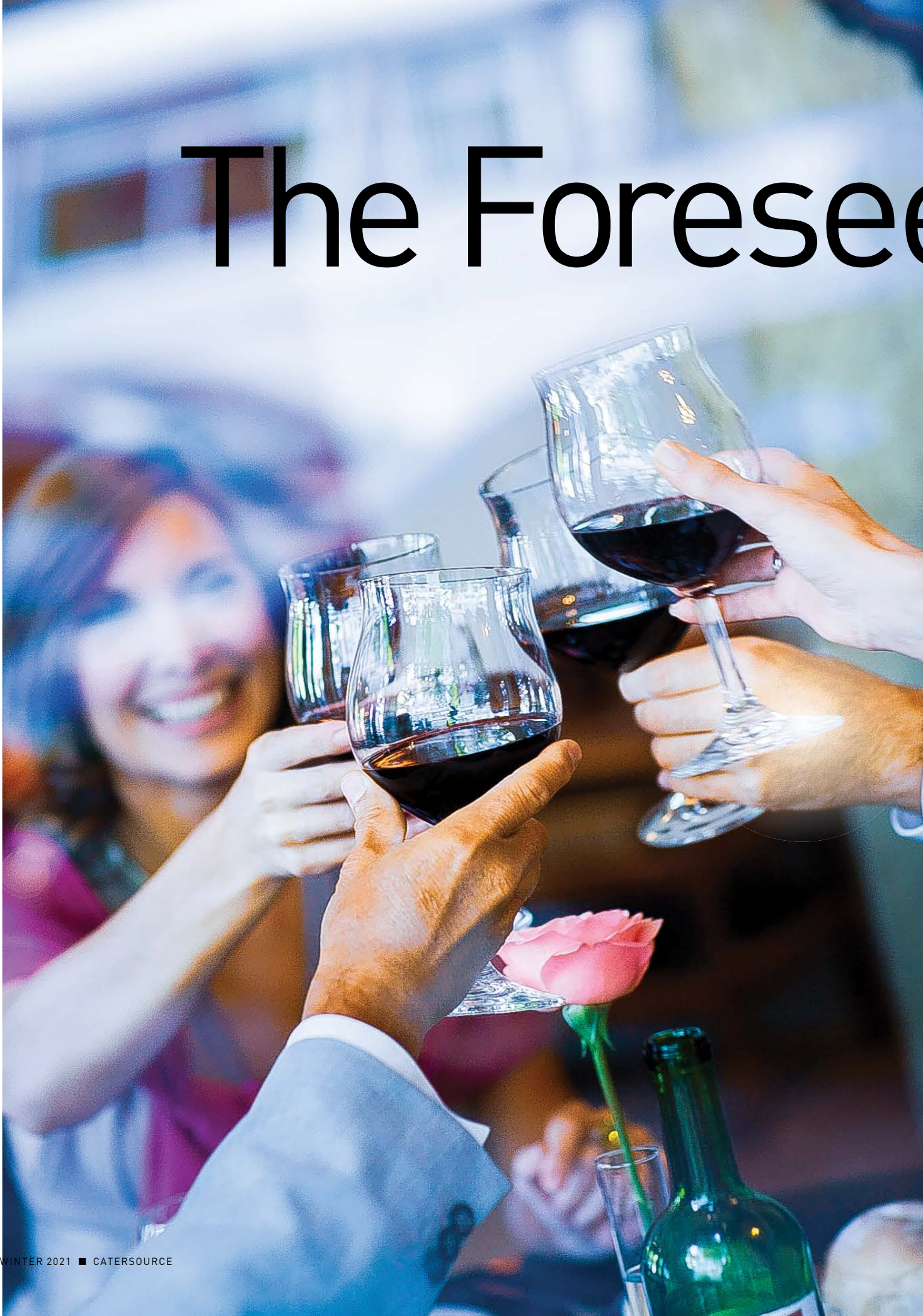
### METHOD

1. Pour all ingredients into a cocktail shaker filled with ice cubes.
2. Shake and strain into a chilled cocktail glass.





# The Foresee



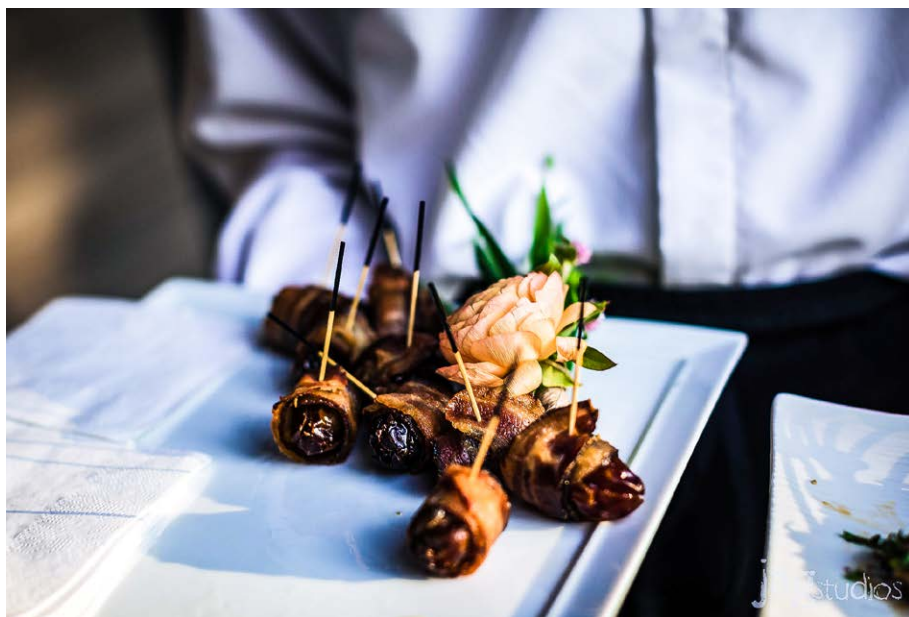


# earable Future

**“We’re very hopeful” is the resounding statement heard across the U.S. and beyond.**

PASSED APPETIZERS, SERVED DURING A 2020 WEDDING ON THE EAST COAST, WERE MOST DEFINITELY A LUXURY FOR ANY EVENT WITH AN IN-PERSON ASPECT DURING THE PANDEMIC. PHOTO COURTESY JACLYN WATSON EVENTS AND JAG STUDIOS

In the Fall issue of *Catersource*, Carl Sacks, Executive Director for Leading Caterers of America, offered mid-year predictions regarding how he felt the remaining few months of 2021 would unfold. “There has been a massive buildup of asset-based household wealth in the U.S.,” he noted. “This is in part because of the remarkable (and sometimes perplexing) runup in the stock market [up to mid-Q3], and because of spending deferred during the pandemic. Most U.S. workers, particularly in white collar jobs, have remained employed during the pandemic. They have been banking a lot of their pay due to deferred spending on vacations, restaurant meals, sports and entertainment, and other typical activities.”



Has the spending begun? Have catered events of all kinds returned?

As the end of 2021 arrived, we spoke (and listened) to several executives from across the U.S. offering their take regarding various aspects of catering business. Here’s a recap:

## **Full service corporate events & meetings**

Sacks noted earlier in the year that small to medium local and regional meetings would begin to pop on the calendar for Q3 2021 and later, including SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal) events, as well as corporate events.



BUFFETS ARE FINALLY ON THE WAY BACK INTO EVENTS IN 2022 AND BEYOND. PHOTO COURTESY JACLYN WATSON EVENTS AND JAG STUDIOS

jagstudios

It's a mixed bag, depending upon region. In some areas, employees are returning to corporate offices, in other areas not at all. Employers are skittish in some regions about spending, others look to spending money on their employees as an investment in company culture and staff appreciation.

In the Chicago area as of mid-November, mask mandates are still in place, and very few companies have welcomed their employees back to the office. "It's a ghost town during the week," said Catering by Michaels' Director of Operations, Jeff Ware. "We have not seen any pickup yet in the day-to-day corporate events, meetings, or specialty drop off division. It's still very slow. Where we have seen the pickup is in the educational market: most of our schools and universities are fully back on campus and we've seen the return from that sector."

In the Denver area, Ingrid Nagy, Founder and CEO of Catering by Design noted that the activity for proposals is high, but due to the spike in COVID cases in the area, "not a lot of people are pulling the trigger." Nagy believes the company won't see a lot of corporate business until spring of 2022.

In Dallas, Craig James, Regional Vice President of Food Glorious Food says corporate business is picking up, but "a lot of what we are seeing is a two-week lead time, which makes things a little messy." He believes they will see people back to the office by January.

In Las Vegas, an entirely different story is unfolding. "We

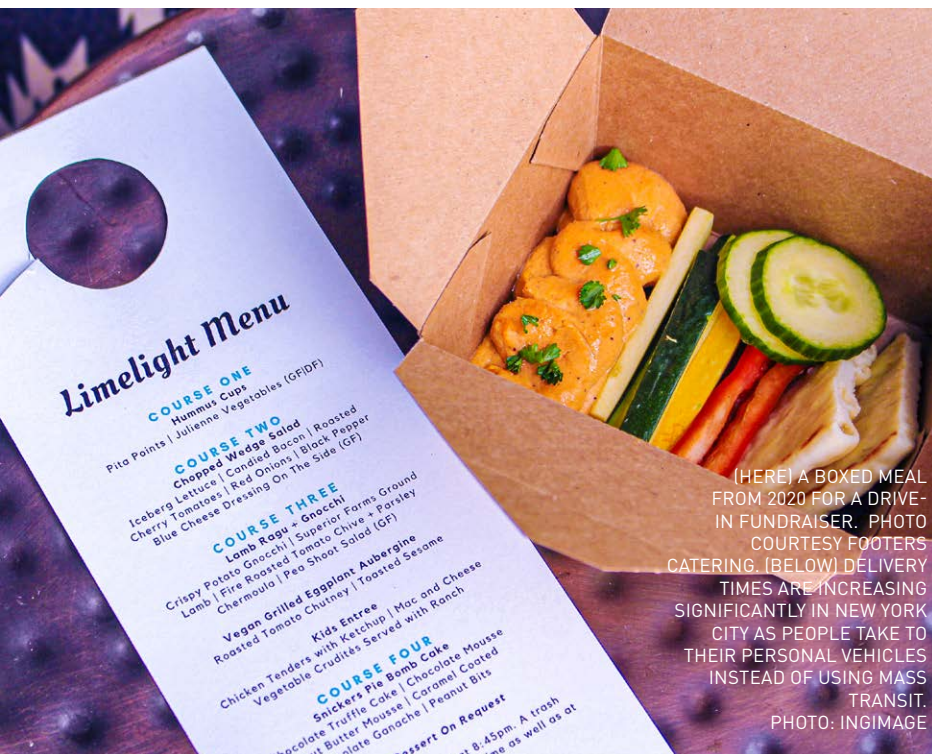
see 65,000 people at football games, concerts, whatever!" says Pam Howatt, President of Divine Events. "Fingers crossed, our positivity rate is only 6.7% and has been maintaining that for the last month or so, which is pretty amazing what with all of the activity that's going on. Our business has been an amazing mix of small business meetings and a lot of private events. We were 82% to 83% corporate before COVID, so we are hopeful, [all is] looking positive right now."

In San Francisco, catering businesses relying on corporate spends are still suffering, with mask mandates still in place. At Taste Catering, company president Mags Teskey noted that, due to frequent communication with corporate clients, the company hopes to see a lot of spring business in lieu of holiday and autumn 2021 business.

In the New York and Connecticut areas, Jeffrey Selden, Managing Partner of Marcia Selden Catering & Events noted that one of their largest corporate clients had just reopened its offices, bringing back 2,000 employees. "They are planning full steam ahead as if everything is normal," he said. However, certification of vaccination and testing for everyone who walks on their property, even for a delivery, makes things difficult when working with outside vendors.

In Portland, Oregon, a "triple whammy" of challenges to corporate events arose over 2020 and into 2021. COVID, the riots, and a grim homeless situation in the core downtown area has kept workers from returning to their desks and businesses boarded up. The mask mandate is in play until February 2022, which will hopefully curb the





**“Paying labor to make [corporate catering] deliveries doesn't even make sense anymore because I can't charge enough to make them worthwhile.”**

— **Robin Selden**, Partner and Executive Chef, Marcia Selden Catering & Events

hold COVID has in that area.

In Los Angeles, experiential marketing events are happening full tilt. Marketers didn't spend well in 2021, and if they don't spend it now, they might not get that budget back in subsequent years, says Nace Neubauer, CEO of Contemporary Catering. “They are finding ways to spend it right now, so the stuff that is happening is happening at premium rates. Like \$125,000 for a 40-person sales dinner. In a backyard.”

## Corporate delivery catering

“I remember that part of the business,” said Paul Neumann, President, Neumann's Kitchen (New York City) with a rueful smile “...it was back in 2019.” The consensus is that corporate delivery has essentially disappeared in New York City. “It's not really coming back in any recognizable form or necessarily a form we are going to jump back into, so it's one of the factors that makes us consider what Neumann's Kitchen 2020-21-22 is now versus what it was up until the pandemic.”

Neumann noted that office building occupancies are approximately 10% to 20% in New York City—maybe. When people return, he believes 100% occupancy will “normally” look like 60% occupancy, despite that many of the large commercial office buildings are—either in conjunction with their major tenants or on their own—building out major amenity spaces: gyms, conference centers, restaurants, cafes, to make their employees feel good about returning.

Ghost kitchens will also significantly affect a caterer's ability to jump back into the market. One significant barrier to caterers: building management wants to reduce the number of people entering the building. “But if you are a ghost kitchen doing 20 brands, then you're satisfying 20 different taste levels, 20 different options in one delivery. [Corporate catering] has not just been changed by this, it has been blown apart. I don't know what it will look like in six months or a year—or ever,” said Neumann.

Another delivery barrier in the New York City market is the switch from mass transit and crowded subway cars to an increase in personal cars on the streets and highways into and out of the city. Delivery times are increasing significantly, says Robin Selden, Partner and Executive Chef, Marcia Selden Catering & Events. “Paying labor to make these deliveries doesn't even make sense anymore because I can't charge enough to make them worthwhile; so, we're just trying to get out of it entirely.”

On the opposite end of the country, however, a light glimmers for the VT Group in Portland. As hotels become unable to handle food service due to staffing issues, food supply, or smaller customer base, the VT Group has been hired to go in with box lunches, catered meals, and mostly delivery and drop off for hotel ballrooms and meeting rooms. “There are opportunities that come from odd places,” Art Fortuna, President, says, noting also that a local golf course needed help with staffing for their



A WEDDING FROM GRANDE AFFAIRES, A SOCIAL DIVISION OF DECO PRODUCTIONS, WAS SCHEDULED FOR MAY 2, 2020 AND WAS POSTPONED DUE TO COVID-19. THE WEDDING INSTEAD TOOK PLACE ON AUGUST 8, 2020 WITH A SMALLER GUEST LIST. PHOTO COURTESY MANDY LYNN PHOTOGRAPHY

tournaments. “They had the food but didn’t have the service staff, so we provided that. They were thrilled to get somebody who knows what they’re doing instead of the high school kids they usually use. There are opportunities.”

Tracy Vessillo, President, Puff ‘n Stuff Catering in Florida agrees. “Puff didn’t really play in the corporate delivery world before, but what we are starting to see happen is that it’s a little safer for corporations to have a meeting and have a corporate delivery opposed to a big function. A lot of traditional foodservice companies that had a traditional café ...the population isn’t there anymore and they can’t afford to go in and produce food. We’ve had a couple of foodservice companies come to us and say, ‘will you produce the food for us?’ They’ll brand it and have their employees heat it up and serve it. We have actually picked up a decent amount of business doing that.”

Back in Chicago, Ware remarks that, “the delivery business is critical to our business, so we have to make it work.

“We won’t see anything else in 2021; but we are definitely hearing from our corporate clients that they are remodeling offices, building more meeting rooms and less cubicles, and facilitating the future of what they see the workplace looking like: a place where people are going to come to be together; and that creates opportunity for us. We’ve seen a lot of corporate clients that are reaching out to us and other caterers in the market for a formal RFP process, saying they want to change the way catering works in their buildings; we don’t want to have 20 different people coming in delivering, they want to streamline to two or three providers for catering. We have a lot in our delivery pipeline as soon as the lights go on.”

## Life cycle events & social entertaining

In early Q3, Sacks pointed to a robust recovery of weddings, quinceañeras, mitzvahs, and other social events. “Some of these have been rescheduled from the pandemic months, but much of this business is just part of the typical flow of life.” He also noted that social entertaining “will start to recover substantially.”

This prediction was recently echoed by *The Wall Street Journal* on November 28, when it published, “[Planning a Wedding for 2022 May Be Harder than Finding Your Soul Mate](#)”—citing that wedding planners and vendors across the U.S. are reporting record numbers of inquiries and bookings through 2024. The article cited projections from The Knot website, which stated “an estimated 2.6 million weddings will take place in the U.S. in 2022, a record high. Around the same number of weddings have been set in 2021, leading to vendors and venues finding themselves overbooked and, in some cases, increasing prices.”

Sacks remarked that in a show of hands at a recent Q4 meeting for on premise caterers, most of them “are so booked [for weddings] that they can’t find the space to accommodate them all.”

This is certainly true in Cincinnati, where the three venues owned by Funky’s Catering are 82% booked. A fourth is opening soon and Principal Michael Forcus hopes the backlog of inquiries will ease into that venue as well. “I’ve never been this far booked in advance at this time for the upcoming year. I think weddings are going to stay strong through 2023.”



At the Connecticut Wedding Group, “not only are we booking these dates,” says Executive Vice President Jonathan Jennings, “but we are booking them at a higher price point than before. ...As couples fill in the details of their weddings, they’re spending money.” Jennings points to the pent-up demand from 2020 and 2021. “A lot of these people extended their engagements, and it just seems like everybody is ready to spend money...buying all of the options and amenities that are available, buying the best of everything. We’re very hopeful that it will transition into a very nice year next year.”

At Divine Events in Las Vegas, Sales Director Rebecca Gullixson has seen in the last quarter of 2021, “an uptick in higher dollar, higher volume celebrations of life. Really going all out, pulling out all the stops with bar packages and action stations, the whole nine yards. Really celebrating the occasion.”

On the East Coast, says Robin Selden, “clients are looking for different and exciting things to electrify their guests, we’re doing a lot of celebrity work, we’re bringing in name acts—because they just have the money to spend. We’re also doing a lot of destination stuff, which is not our forte, but we’ll take it! We had three destination weddings in one weekend because of COVID and all the changes of dates; it’s crazy stuff but really exciting.”

Says Sacks, “Clearly, there are a lot of rich people in this country who have more money than they know what to do with.”

## Fundraisers & galas

“Fundraisers and galas are already happening [in 2021],” said Sacks earlier this year, “sometimes as hybrid events, and sometimes as face-to-face events. It will probably be 2022 before we start to see fully reloaded gala schedules.”

And, despite that New York City typically holds galas during the week, much of the rest of the country points to weekends as gala fundraiser prime time—especially during prime wedding season.

This concern was echoed by Lizzy Desibia, Vice President, Russell Morin Catering & Events in Massachusetts: the request from clients to push their non-profit galas into Q3 (prime wedding season) has created a conundrum. Keep the corporate client or decline a lucrative wedding contract?

In the Dallas area, Craig James noted that non-profit events are back and are even 50% higher in attendance than pre-COVID. “What used to be a 300- to 400-person event is now a 600- to 800-person event.” What makes the event most challenging? Budgets for non-profits remain at pre-COVID levels. More people, same amount of spend.

In the Midwest region, non-profit events are returning with average guest counts. Major corporations, however, are not expected to return to events until January 2022.

In Portland, OR, Fortuna notes that much of VT Group’s non-profit business has moved into “some kind of virtual or hybrid event” where “maybe 100 people will be at an event and the rest of them will be online in some way or another.” He notes that before the variant took hold, there was a surge of activity in the summer, but the company returned to virtual models into Q4. “It’s a roller coaster.”

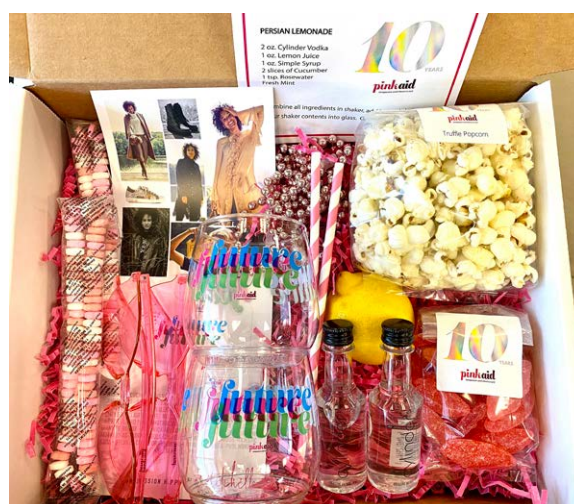
In the Los Angeles area, 800 employees working a recent event were required to be PCR Rapid tested on site as well as provide proof of vaccination to even walk on the property. Everyone is doing this “at an extremely high cost,” notes Neubauer, “but it’s reducing other parts of the budget. Clients are allocating \$30,000 to \$40,000 on the event just to manage the COVID protocol.”

In the Midwest, Catering Creations’ Sous Chef Jenny Bast said that outdoor tented events have been successful... maybe too successful in one instance. “We had a turn-out of

600 people when we were expecting 400.” At that event, no proof of vaccination was required. A second event, however, which did require POV, had average attendance. The spring season of 2022, she commented, looks very positive for non-profit work.

## The foreseeable future

As the country emerges from the pandemic, challenges remain high for every company, no matter what region of the country one is located in. Supply chain issues, staffing depletion, artificial intelligence shaping the workforce to tackle tasks faster and more cheaply, deciding whether the retention of certain aspects of pandemic business such as virtual and hybrid events is worth keeping, and whether minimum wage increases will impact companies heavily are many of the lingering thoughts. Time will tell. 



A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISER TREAT BOX FROM MARCIA SELDEN CATERING. PHOTO COURTESY JEFFREY SELDEN

# 25 Positive Predictions *for 2022*







# dictions

# SOI 2022

**Let's start off the new year with some positivity—here are 25 ways your catering colleagues are positioning to make 2022 a healthy, prosperous, and fabulous new year.**

By Sue Pelletier

Despite the high hopes we all had for 2021, it turned out to be a bit more of a roller-coaster ride than expected. Despite a mostly successful vaccine rollout in the U.S. that has made a big dent in the health and economic havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it still was a year of fits and starts thanks to the Delta variant. Fortunately, catering professionals are quick to learn from experience, are resourceful, and they're always looking for new ways to exceed their clients' expectations.

We asked 25 top industry thought leaders to share their perspectives on what they have learned over the nearly two years of COVID disruption, and what they are looking forward to as we round the corner into a shiny new year. Here are just a few of the ideas, trends, and positive perspectives they have for the future.

Do you have a story to tell? Let us know! Contact Catersource Editor in Chief [Kathleen Stoehr](mailto:kathleen.stoehr@informa.com) at [kathleen.stoehr@informa.com](mailto:kathleen.stoehr@informa.com) share your own lessons learned and thoughts on how to not just survive but flourish in the coming year.



# 1

## **Brittney Drye, Founder and Editor in Chief, Love Inc. Magazine**

2022 feels like the year our industry will rise from the ashes. With the amount of weddings and events that are planned for the year, wedding pros are just going to be trying to keep their heads above water. The result, I hope, is some long overdue positive conversations about mental health, and the unrealistic “hustle” expectations that this industry tends to have. Hopefully, we can all learn to have a little more kindness and grace with each other and have a deeper respect for each other's lives outside of our careers.

Trend-wise, I am excited that micro-weddings are here to stay. The intimacy and attention to detail—plus the amount of detail that can be put into it thanks to the smaller guest list—makes them fun to publish.



***We are not talking about COVID anymore, what we are talking about now is having fantastic parties, and that clients are excited to be able to gather with friends and family and make up for lost time.***

— Jonathan Jennings

**Jonathan Jennings,**  
Executive Vice  
President/COO,  
Connecticut  
Wedding Group

We have seen just about the entire wedding clientele take a deep breath and exhale after a year and a half of micro-ceremonies and Zoom weddings and not being able to be with the people who are most important to them. You never know how important something is to you until it is gone! Now there is so much pent-up energy, and I think we are going to see more over-the-top weddings in 2022 than we have seen in a really long time. Our design and decor teams are more engaged than ever before as people are asking, what else can we do? How can we make this not just the wedding we envisioned but the best wedding ever? How can we surprise and delight our guests? How can we make them walk into this space and

say, “Wow, this is incredible”?

We are not talking about COVID anymore—what we are talking about now is having fantastic parties, and that clients are excited to be able to gather with friends and family and make up for lost time. All of the hesitancy is gone; it's full speed ahead! People want to be in rooms filled with love and dancing and energy—they are excited again after being nervous about having to worry about who is vaccinated and who's not. Now we can focus on the core of the event, which is gathering people together in rooms full of love and beautiful things.

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**Leslie LaSorsa, CSEP,**  
General Manager, Crave  
Catering

There are so many great things happening; we are seeing a desire for the nostalgia of happier times

**3** mixed with the whimsy of the future—a black vodka martini with gold sugar rim and gold dust floating is both decadent and mysterious. Fried pimento mac 'n cheese or



extravagant caviar and crème fraîche whipped deviled quail eggs—the sky is the limit! Even those with fewer actual dollars to spend are still ready

to spend for a micro event for 10 or 20 that they want catered. The ultra-rich and the pent-up are both ready to venture out.

It is crazy in Texas, where the demand is definitely surpassing capacity. We need people! Large events are coming to Austin, and the locals are ready to have a great time too. There is so much energy right now—we caterers don't know who to refer to as we don't have the staffing capacity to take care of everyone.



## Monique Boyd, CWP, Director of Catering & Special Events, Legends Hospitality at SoFi Stadium

Connecting creatively to celebrate should be the theme for 2022! It is exciting to see companies scheduling events to gather their teams to connect in person. We are booking meetings, receptions, and awards dinners as guests look to celebrate the highlights over the past year and a half.

Gone are the boxed meals as we are now seeing our culinary teams design aromatic, delicious menu offerings that showcase their talents in single-serving formats. However, the real star of events is cocktails! Specialty drinks using Monin's beverage mixtures like Energy Boost, Immunity Boost, or Golden Turmeric that can be mixed with vodka or served mock cocktail style, are setting a new trend: wellness wins in 2022.

## Jennifer Perna, President, Fulton Market Consulting

It's great to be working with clients that are approaching their sales planning process differently for 2022. They are respectful of what they achieved in the past but aren't approaching next year "the way they used to do it." These clients are reviewing their existing human and financial resources and

**5** making smarter planning decisions to manage leaner, more profitable businesses in 2022. Running a healthier organization with an increased bottom line profit is better than hitting a top line revenue number. My prediction is SUCCESS for business owners and managers that lead this way. Making 20% profit on revenue of \$2 million dollars is more rewarding and realistic than stretching the team for \$4 million dollars at 10% profit.





6



### **Joseph Pina, Campus Executive Chef, Sodexo, Johnson & Wales University**

We're back to the excitement of being able to break bread as we all come together again. Food is a big part of being able to share and create memories all over again. This will be a year of celebration for those of us in food service and catering. People are coming back to events, and we are the people who are creating these amazing experiences. We are very excited to put our stamp back on the celebration of food—we are bringing the fun back to the dining experience!

### **Christie Osborne, Owner, Mountainside Media**

In 2020 when the event industry shut down abruptly, it was devastating for most of us. Then in 2021, as a national speaker at Catersource + The Special Event, I was excited to travel again and take the first steps towards recovery. We quickly realized that recovery wouldn't be a light switch—it would be a dial. One thing that has impressed me about the event industry is that we can adapt. It's in our DNA. We fix things and make things better, and in 2022 I am looking forward to continuing to be a part of that, traveling and keeping each other healthy during a pandemic.



8

### **Vijay Goel, Co-Owner/COO, Bite Catering Couture**



COVID was a massive asteroid impact for our industry. So now as we mammals peek our heads out, the landscape has changed, and the dinosaurs are gone. It's a whole new ballgame and a different evolutionary landscape for those of us who are left.

COVID social distancing reminded most people how important human connections are. We are just starting to see the chaos coming from disconnected companies. The next five years will be filled with lots of people getting together and reestablishing their communities.

The chef shortage and inflationary pressure will make for a dynamic financial picture. The era of cheap BOH labor is probably over, which makes investments in productivity, operational excellence, and pricing critical in navigating the shift.

## 9 **Thaddaeus Smith, Director of Brand Communications & Executive Chef, Sterno Products**

Our business is based on people getting together—most of the products we sell are designed for people to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in buffet lines at big events such as weddings, conferences, and other big celebrations. We were coming off our strongest year ever when the pandemic hit, and boy did it hit us hard.

But we are hopeful about the future. We are looking at an increase of over 10% in sales in the foodservice industry over 2019. While a lot of that has been driven by menu price increases (so it is not really apples to apples) ...but we are

looking at a strong year. We still have supply chain shortages and labor constraints, and everyone is still learning how to deal as the pandemic evolves into an endemic stage as more people get vaccinated.

The brightest spot coming out of the pandemic is that catering operations really looked at what they were doing on takeout, on delivery, on customizing their menus to accommodate customers at home and build their brand to customers they may not have had before. Our customers are saying that they were able to build relationships with customers who were buying delivery and takeout or giving them the opportunity to cater family events or weddings.

We're bullish—we think things are going to turn around because there is a pent-up demand for these events.



## **Michael Stavros, Partner/BizDev, M Culinary Concepts**

# 10

We listened more actively to our company leaders and associates in 2020 and 2021—we will move forward with greater transparency and understanding in 2022. We focused efforts on helping and feeding our community—we will be committed corporate citizens with renewed civic engagement. We strengthened bonds with our clients, venues, and vendors—we will be more thoughtful and proactive partners.

If necessity is the mother of invention, then I think our industry is going to be more innovative than ever in 2022! We have learned to operate more efficiently, doing more than we ever thought possible with less of—well—everything. As supply chains gradually stabilize and prices (fingers crossed!) fall back to Earth, we will rebuild our companies, reenergize our workforces, and reignite our shared passion for all things hospitality. BRING. IT. ON.





**Chef Gregory Taylor, CEO/Creative Director,  
The Black Fox Company; Executive Chef,  
Chef Greg Taylor & Co.**

2019 was a year when many individuals established goals and set new expectations for their businesses. We all felt as if the new year would bring new business and opportunities. 2020 came and hit us like a ton of bricks and knocked everyone off their course to success. However, 2021 should have been the year that we all regained our balance and set a new focus on what our goals are. The beauty that was born from such an ugly year was the fact that we can now take those bricks that hit us, build new dreams, and set new goals.

The advantages we have today are the lessons that came with each brick. How can we better engage with our clients? How can we set up even better websites and online ordering systems? What can we do to ensure that our customers will receive a safe and healthy dining experience?

The newest trend is also the oldest and most valuable trend ever in this industry—the customer experience. I am optimistic about the future of business and the catering industry because we can finally return to creating those out-of-the-box, forward-thinking experiences that our clients are paying for. Want to be successful in 2022? Be creative. Be innovative. Remember the client!

Photo by Heidi Harris

**Margaret Brower,  
Founder & CEO,  
Rainmaker Sales  
& Marketing  
Group, LLC**

2021 put the catering world in triage mode: “How do we get to the end of the year with such severe staffing issues?” 2022 is the year we are focused on growth in every way, especially with companies of all sizes encouraging and fostering employee professional development. It is invigorating to witness how employers are looking at the experience of their staff pre- and post-pandemic and aiding them in making changes. I see the deliberate investment in the people who got them through the last two years. Companies are adding support players and sales concierge positions to manage the high demands placed on their sales managers. We are back to loving sales and the “make dreams happen” mentality in a mutually beneficial way. As Americans seek careers with a work/life balance, forward-thinking leadership teams are shifting the narrative of the hospitality lifestyle.





### **Andrew Gerstel, CEO, Windows Catering**

It would be easy for me to say that one of the biggest lessons we have learned during the COVID pandemic is “cash is king” for the survival of your business. But I will go a step further and say that people and passion matter almost as much. We quickly learned that having the right people on our team, dedicated to the mission of the company, with a survivalist mentality and a passion for what we do, was going to be the key to not only getting through the pandemic but for securing our future as well. As we had several pivots to create new revenue streams for the company, we tested the creativity and adaptability of our team as well. Detailed communications and on-going training, at all levels of our organization, increased significantly during the pandemic. This renewed focus has led to a more cohesive, skilled, cross-trained and driven team.

Another important aspect of our business, that we emphasized and learned the importance of, is the relationships we have in the industry. All our vendor partners, clients, independent contractors, purveyors, and especially our bankers, were so supportive as we navigated this new world and we reciprocated and collaborated at every opportunity as well. Without these relationships, our company’s future, and the enthusiasm we have for what lies ahead, would not be nearly as great.

# 14

### **Christine Hubbard, General Manager, Colleges of the Fenway Dining**

I am looking forward to continuing to learn how to adapt to new situations—and I’m looking forward to getting events back! This summer we had our first commencement ceremony in two years, and it was cool to see those students walk across stage. I’m just looking forward to our new normal.







## **Jay Varga, Executive Chef, The JDK Group**

There is just so much to look forward to as we approach 2022. It is no secret that we all went through very trying times as we moved through the pandemic, and we are still currently feeling some repercussions in one way or another. The positive outlook is that we have a new

year upon us, which will bring new opportunities and will really let the event industry bounce back to what I believe will be just as strong as it was before. I think this will also lead people to want to try new things as well. From a food perspective, it seems everyone wants to try new flavor profiles and cuisines. They are getting more daring which is fantastic because in return it lets us get more creative with their menus!

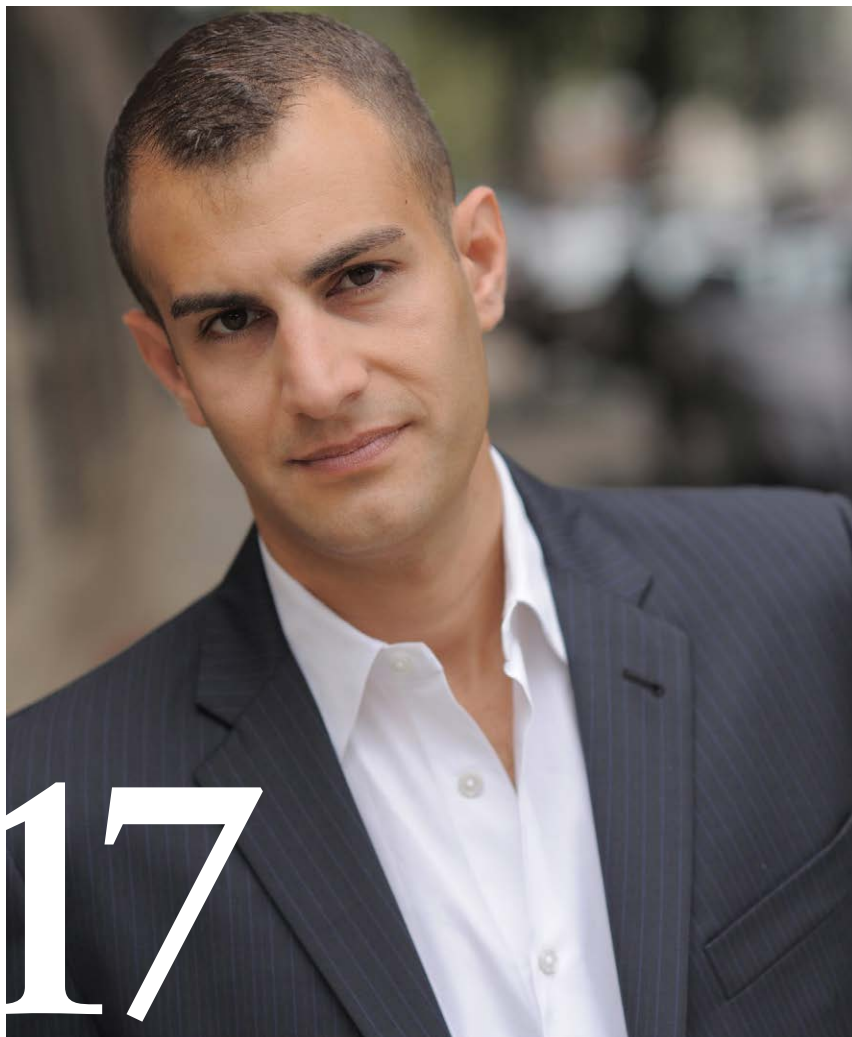
## **Lisa Cox, CEO/SVP Sales & Marketing, Gem City Fine Foods**

The COVID pandemic has challenged everyone in our industry to be creative and flexible. As we at Gem City Fine Foods continue to wade through labor and supply chain shortages that came along later in the game, we find ourselves really focusing in on those suppliers and customers who have shown not only flexibility, but also understanding and willingness to work through challenges with us. Moving into the next

year, we plan to continue to build relationships with those partners. As the 2021 Finalist for the Utah Ethical Business Leadership Award (I'm proud of our team!), we honor all those in our industry who have demonstrated exemplary ethical business practices during these trying times. I predict that 2022 will see great positive gains for those in our industry who have persisted through compassion and cooperation. We are in this together!

# 16





**Ryan Corvaia, Founder & CEO, Dish Food & Events; Board of Directors, International Caterers Association (ICA)**

There is no doubt that 2022 will be the year of the social event with potentially more weddings taking place in the United States than we have seen in decades. Couples are not going to allow COVID to ruin their fun or force them to consider a smaller guest list. More than 70% of our wedding couples here in the New York City market are already having weddings with over 100 guests. That's great news for caterers all over the country that already plan weddings. For businesses that focus more on corporate catering, there is still time to grow the social event side of their

business and capitalize on this boom for 2022 and 2023. There will be more than enough business to go around for caterers in every market.

If the wedding boom is not enough to keep us all busy next year, corporate catering will be making its way back into our lives as well. I predict that the first half of 2022 will be focused on the return to the office, entertaining employees, and offering incentives to come to work. We are seeing companies throwing office happy hours and bringing in lunch for employees at a much higher rate than 2019. Then in the second half of the year, we can look forward to more client-focused events such as marketing activations and fundraising galas. All this said, I have no doubt that 2022 is going to be our industry's comeback year—a year that we all need, deserve.

18

**Zoe Moore, Inclusive Hospitality Consultant & Strategist**

Traditionally, business as usual has been acceptable, but the last two years have seen a paradigm shift in dialogue. Industry leaders are acknowledging that equity, diversity, and inclusion is not just about attendees in the audience or speakers on stage but more importantly senior leadership diversity, equitable economic opportunities, and inclusive operational practices. I am hopeful that in 2022 this dialogue will again shift to measurable and sustainable action that becomes standard across the global business of events.







**Syd Sexton, Chief Operating Officer, Catering By Design**

# 19

One day we are booking corporate events, and then the next day things get a little squishy, but I have hope. I predict that December 2022 is going to be a record holiday season. The stars are aligned—the dates are perfect—and next year is going to be a blowout. We are going to have a great summer for social and nonprofit events, so much so that we are going to have to be careful about not overbooking ourselves.

We should start to see the convention business come back in the third quarter. That is not a guess, it is what should happen based on the conversations I am having with our DMC clients. Our corporate clients are still hesitant right now, so this holiday season is

going to be soft in that regard, but our nonprofits are talking about going back to their full events by next year. I feel confident that our numbers for 2022 are going to exceed 2019—we will blow it out of the water second, third, and fourth quarter.

It's taking a little more time than we were hoping for everything to come back, but we must roll with it—and this industry has done a great job of rolling with it, adapting, and surviving. We are still here, and we are ready for when the business comes back. We are still standing, we are still supporting each other. Life is good.

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**Dean A. Mistretta, AS, BA, MBA, Director of Catering, Stockfoodgroup.com/Decadent-Catering, Stock Food Group, Decadent Catering Pizzico Oyster Bar (Providence, R.I.) & East-Bay Oyster Bar (Barrington, R.I.)**

**20** My phone is ringing again. After a year of silence, the new client inquiries for offsite catering are back. Wedding inquiries are at the top of the list. While the average guest count is slightly lower than normal—80 to 100 people—these are nonetheless still inquiries. Because of the extensive news coverage, my potential new clients are well aware of supply chain, labor challenges, and cost increases. This has made my job easier when working with client budgets.

I was faced with the arduous task of revisiting client pricing with clients I had booked pre-pandemic who are now revisiting their event. We have

faced price increases for our clients honestly and with transparency. To my pleasant surprise, they met me with understanding and flexibility with restructuring events.

I have collaborated with other local competing catering companies in my area. I have fed them leads for clients that do not qualify for our catering services. This has led to a more friendly industry environment and appreciation from inquiries that I could not provide a catering quote.

My relationship with our facility managers has prompted a noticeable increase in leads from their referrals. Having worked with them during the pandemic only strengthened our business relationship—for the better.





# 21

## **Holly Powers-Verbeck, Owner/Founder, HeyChef!**

2022 is the year of the Independent Chef. Forbes predicted half of the workforce would be freelancers by 2020. While the traditional restaurant may still hire full- or part-time culinary staff, this signals a giant change and far-reaching implications for chefs across the nation. Chefs no longer need to tie themselves to one employer while dreaming of having their own businesses. Post-2020, the world's a vastly more welcoming place for personal chefs and private chefs who want to be independent, and who want to work for their own profits instead of someone else's. Thankfully, technology is making it easier than ever, and there's online access to successful, proven models which help chefs sidestep the costly, time-consuming mistakes of starting and running their own businesses. Consumers' choices and preferences have changed, making it possible for chefs to earn a living wage working for themselves and the clients they serve—and it is about time! Chefs have a lot to look forward to in 2022.

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## **Tracy Stuckrath, President and Chief Connection Officer, thrive! meetings & events**

I am seeing caterers rethinking how they are managing their businesses to take advantage of the prime opportunity of honing in on new menu items. I think caterers are going to streamline their menus so they are easier to make and potentially will require less staff. They are also looking at new opportunities to be creative—some really cool and creative catering presentation styles have

come about during COVID. And I think they are relying on each other a lot more as well, asking each other how they are running their businesses differently now to address staffing and food supply challenges. What food and beverage options can we provide that are more cost effective but still fun? The possibilities that could come from those collaborations are exciting.

# 22





# 23

## **David Lombardo, General Manager, Lombardo's**

As we begin to look forward to the year ahead, we are seeing positive signs from the venue and catering side. Social events are back and stronger than ever—we are seeing the spending on the social side up over 20% with people excited to increase their décor budgets and provide more complimentary drink options and an expanded palate for food creativity! All those Zoom cooking classes and at-home recipe explorations during COVID have expanded the palates of our guests and they are looking for outstanding

presentations and creativity from our chefs! Although corporate events are still slow to return, we are seeing some good increases in Q2 and Q3 bookings and the confidence of corporate clients to get back to in-person events is growing.

The last few years, non-profit events have really struggled with the lack of in-person experiences for their donors and we are seeing a return to getting groups back together. There is also a renewed passion from vendors. Those who survived the last few years really innovated and invested in the quality of both their product and customer service, creating a better experience for the guests.



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## **Scott Frankel, President, Animatic Media, LLC**

I believe we will continue to see the evolution of hybrid events. The tricky thing is that the term “hybrid” is somewhat ambiguous—if you were to ask 100 planners what hybrid means you will get 50 different answers and they are all correct. One might define a hybrid event as bringing in outside speakers through a stream in front of an in-person audience. Another might define it as streaming out a presenter at an in-person event to an external audience.

How ever you define it, having a plan to go hybrid is a safety net for planners in case of a resurgence of COVID, or any other occurrence that might hinder attendance at an in-person meeting.

In the end, my greatest hope in 2022 for the AV industry is that the amazing people with worlds of knowledge are able to adapt to this new environment. I hope this pushes our leaders to think more creatively and be more proactive in producing new ways of doing things.

# 24





**Jason Sutton,  
Executive Chef/  
Director of  
Operations,  
Footers Catering at  
Social Capitol**

At Footers, our clients and their guests are ready to get back to partying more than ever. Rolling into 2022, I am seeing lots of interactive food stations taking weddings and events by storm. We are rolling out an authentic Street Taco Station where corn tortillas are freshly cooked on a cast-iron skillet as well as a Bao Bun Station where we will be rotating steamer baskets to heat the bao buns right at the station. My favorite idea that came out of this year has been Chef Shelby Anderson's Bread Bar Station, where we said, "life's too short, bring on the gluten!" and built an interactive table where guests get to choose from a variety of freshly baked breads, salts, oils, vinegars, and compound butters while also getting to design their own custom baby focaccia bread with different roasted vegetables that we then bake in the oven as a take away gift!

**CS**

***Rolling into 2022, I am seeing lots of interactive food stations taking weddings and events by storm.***

– Jason Sutton





# Executing on a New Future

Part 2 of a 3-part series on Leading into the Future.

**In the Fall 2021 issue of Catersource, we described key points needed to take your leadership to a new level.** In this article, we are going to discuss the most important piece of new learning and practice required to declare and execute on a new future.

As experienced hospitality leaders, executive coaches and business advisors, we continue to hear similar concerns from leaders that we did before the pandemic.

1. Generational shift and developing leaders
2. Actions and results not produced by people
3. Creativity and competition
4. Operational effectiveness
5. Capacity, growth, and scaling
6. Culture and engagement

My promise to you is that the solutions to these issues are more within your grasp than you might think if you are willing to see and act with a new lens.

The solutions are simple, but they are not trivial. There are several “enemies of learning” that keep us from fully admitting the need to make these changes in ourselves and our teams (I will discuss these “enemies” in Part 3).

## Death by meeting

Let me start with a few declarations:

- Organizations exist and are brought into being because of conversations and care, concerns and shared promises, and commitments.
- Leaders are responsible for bringing teammates of different abilities and strengths together into conversations of a common purpose, that produce action toward the desired results you say you want.
- Leadership is a practice, and it must be continually cultivated through conversations to be effective.

What is the common thread in these declarations? Conversation. Yet conversation (the untrained often say conflict, argument, disagreement) is one of the most untrained and fear-based skills of the leader. An organization is a network of conversations. These conversations are either aligned or not aligned to achieve their mission and purpose. What happens when we are not aligned to our purpose and mission? Our conversations are not aligned and then our actions are not aligned. We do not accomplish what we say we want. Your results depend on how effective the conversations you and your team are having to produce the results you say you want.

Does this sound like you and/or your organization? Death by meeting. Conversations resulting in zero action or results. Throwing solutions at a wall in hopes that they stick. Leaders and teams continually laying down and stepping over the same organizational speedbumps. Employees are unclear, resigned, burned out, and resentful. Look at the ongoing “Great Resignation” for proof. The work force in our country is looking to join organizations that will help them to find more value, satisfaction, and meaning in their lives. This is a possibility and an opportunity for your organization if you view it that way.

## Start the conversation

Since the early ‘70s the Global Institute for Generative Leadership has been teaching coaches, consultants, and leaders how to



THE WORK FORCE IN OUR COUNTRY IS LOOKING TO JOIN ORGANIZATIONS THAT WILL HELP THEM TO FIND MORE VALUE, SATISFACTION, AND MEANING IN THEIR LIVES. THIS IS A POSSIBILITY AND AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUR ORGANIZATION IF YOU VIEW IT THAT WAY.”

observe, dissect, and improve the conversations needed for teams. These conversations are the heart of coordinating action and results. If you learn and practice them, you will be able to overcome your challenges and move toward a more meaningful future.

- **Conversation for Care** – Organizations, teams, vision, and objectives all come into being because of people’s cares and promises, offers and commitments.
- **Conversation for Trust** – This is not a conversation we have just once; it is ongoing.
- **Conversation for Possibility** (or speculation or innovation) – Brings out a mood of flexibility, playfulness, openness; not making assessments or judgements that are limiting.
- **Conversation for Action** – A manageable structure of making and reporting on promises and commitments based on the “unities” of conditions of satisfaction. Clarity on what each person will and will not commit to is the result. How to report on the status of your promise. How to foresee and overcome potential roadblocks and

breakdowns to your promise.

- **Conversation for Complaint** – With an increased ability for a team to make bigger offers and promises comes the opportunity for inevitable breakdowns to these promises. This is happening in our lives all the time. The ability to comfortably have a conversation that results in a promise not being met is powerful. There is no shame or blame. There is only improvement together.
- **Conversation for Recovery** – Breakdowns and interruptions are inevitable. Have a conversation to recenter, reassess, and recalibrate to fulfill the promise.

## Questions you should be asking

1. What is the default future for yourself and your organization, if you continue to have the same conversations, take the same actions toward your same future?
2. Will that default future bring you and your team the value, satisfaction, and meaning you declare that you want in your life?
3. What new learning and observations are opening for you after reading this article?
4. What are you curious about?
5. What are the missing conversations that you need to have?

Choose your future. Love your choice. You are choosing either way.



**Greg Karl** is founder of Step Change Leader, a generative business advisory, leadership & organizational development firm. Step Change Leader helps owners and teams discover and generate a future that provides value, satisfaction and meaning. He is also on the Certified Catering Consultants team.

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# ACE *Gala*

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## A W A R D S

**Deadline: December 31, 2021**

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## SPECIAL EVENTS



# TAKING ON THE 2022 TRENDS



ITAMESHI IS A NEW FUSION CUISINE THAT COMBINES JAPANESE AND ITALIAN CUISINES TOGETHER, SUCH AS THIS WAFU ITALIAN SOY GINGER PORK RAGU WITH SESAME RICOTTA CAVATELLI FROM CHEF ROBBIE FELIC OF PASTA RAMEN IN NEW JERSEY. PHOTO COURTESY KIKKOMAN

**T**he food scene will continue to innovate and shape the catering world as we move out of a pandemic, and into a new tasty-looking future.

**2022 will see many of 2021's most popular trends continue, while also looking internationally for flavor and menu inspiration. Check out what's on the menu for 2022 with these food and beverage trends.**

## A GLOBAL MASHUP

International cuisines will be joining forces in 2022 to deliver flavor combinations that will not only excite guests, but that will allow chefs to experiment in their own kitchens.

While global food fusions are nothing new, little is known about one of the newest emerging mashups, Itameshi. Itameshi simply means "Italian Food" in Japanese, but it's also become synonymous for a new fusion cuisine that combines Japanese and Italian cuisines together for something truly unique. One example of this would be tarako spaghetti, which combines pollock roe with spaghetti along with butter, soy sauce, and dried seaweed, which creates a delicious umami explosion.

2022 will also see the rise of other global fusion cuisines such as Korean and Spanish.





(TOP LEFT) SOME ARE ANTICIPATING 2022 TO BE THE YEAR OF AMERICAN OYSTERS USING SUSTAINABLE FARMING PRACTICES, SUCH AS THOSE OF NATIONAL AQUACULTURE ASSOCIATION. PHOTO COURTESY BUZZ ORR MULTIMEDIA

(BOTTOM LEFT) SHELLFISH—SUCH AS WHOLE CRAB—HAS LONG BEEN A POPULAR MENU ITEM FOR SEAFOOD AFICIONADOS, AND THIS WILL ONLY CONTINUE IN 2022. PHOTO COURTESY AMBER KISPERT



## BLUE FOODS

The deep blue sea offers limitless potential when it comes to innovation. In addition to sustainable fishing practices, such as that of Seafood from Scotland (salmon, haddock, langoustine, and halibut) and sustainable oyster farming, such as from the National Aquaculture Association, new ingredients are also being discovered underwater. For example, seaweed and kelp offer an alternative to traditional greens and garnishes.

Additionally, salt water and sea botanicals can contribute to reinventing snacks, seasonings, cocktails, and even charcuterie boards. Underwater botanicals offer a fresh, earthy flavor to savory meals and cocktails, while salt water brings a fresh and briny bite to foods and beverages.

←PART OF THE GLOBAL MASHUP, KOREAN AND SPANISH DISHES, WILL FUSE TOGETHER IN 2022 TO CREATE SOMETHING TRULY UNIQUE, LIKE THIS KOREAN PAELLA FROM CHEF PETER LEE, CO-OWNER & CHEF AT SECRET BAO IN SANTA BARBARA, CA. PHOTO COURTESY KIKKOMAN







HIBISCUS WILL BE THE FLAVOR OF THE MOMENT IN 2022 FOR USE IN BEVERAGES AND COCKTAILS, AS WELL AS SPREADS AND YOGURTS.

## INGREDIENT & FLAVOR BOMBS

2022 will see the rise of several ingredients and flavors as chefs find creative ways to elevate their dishes.

First up, Yuzu. Tart and sour, this lesser-known citrus fruit is popping up in vinaigrettes, hard seltzers, mayos, and more. Its lime-lemon-grapefruit flavor is also great for accenting soups, veggies, noodles and fish.

Next is kernza, a perennial grain whose growing practices help contribute to overall soil health. With its sweet and nutty flavor, kernza can be used in cereals, beers, other pulse-forward salads and pastas.

Sunflower seeds are expanding their reach, and can now be found in crackers, ice cream, and creamy cheeses.

Look for turmeric (the golden spice) to bring a heap of flavor to cocktails and other beverages, desserts, sauces and dressings, salads, and bread.

Hibiscus will also reign supreme in 2022. While it has long been a delicious addition to beverages and cocktails, chefs will soon be harnessing its sweet, but tart flavor for use in spreads and yogurts. Don't underestimate the appeal of hibiscus' signature pink hue either.



A SUMMER MELON SALAD WITH WATERMELON, SUNOMONO, FRESH HERBS, SMOKED PAPRIKA CRACKER, GUANCIALE AND DRESSED WITH A FERMENTED HONEY YUZU VINAIGRETTE WAS A STUNNING OPENER AT COLETTE RESTAURANT IN JACKSON, WY. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR

Little is known about moringa, but often called the "miracle tree," it has long been used as an herbal remedy in India and Africa. Moringa is often described as having a grassy profile, like that of wheatgrass, spinach, or even kelp. Moringa leaves, powders, and oils are quickly growing in popularity due to its abundance of health properties, and will be making its way into cocktails, sauces, and desserts.

"[Moringa] is a literal super food, and we can sneak this into our diets really seamlessly," said Zoe Adjonyoh, owner of Zoe's Ghana Kitchen, during Tales of the Cocktail (TOTC) 2021.





THE SPECTACULARLY TONED BLUE CORN MUSH WITH MAPLE AND HAZELNUT IS NOURISHING AND DELICIOUS, AND SPEAKS TO THE CLEAN PRACTICES OF FOOD, WHEN STRIPPED DOWN TO ITS MOST ASTONISHING ESSENCE, CAN ALSO BE THE MOST FLAVORFUL. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR



GROW YOUR OWN AND PICK YOUR OWN WILL BECOME EVER MORE POPULAR IN KITCHENS IN 2022.

## FRESH AND FORAGED PRODUCTS

Grow your own and pick your own will become even more popular in kitchens as guests continue to look for sustainable options.

For starters, indoor farming, from hydroponics to aquaponics, has risen greatly in popularity, and producers are constantly finding new, boundary-pushing ways to grow hyper-local crops as a way to be more sustainable.

Additionally, foraging will continue to be a hot trend going forward as more and more people are connecting with the edible plants around them. For example, fresh dandelion greens offer a healthy alternative to traditional garden greens, nettles are great as garnishes or in pesto sauces, garlic mustard is great on salads, and the invasive three-cornered leek is a delicious cross between a leek and a garlic.

## PICKING PLANTS

Over the past several years, the plant-based movement has become such a consistent trend that it has become mainstream. What started off as a few menu offerings has grown into a full-blown dining alternative with everything from carrot hot dogs to mushroom “crab cakes.”

“It’s not just for the vegan audience anymore,” said Mark DiDomanico with Datassential during a recent webinar hosted by *Nation’s Restaurant News*.

Chefs and guests alike have reimagined the make-up of their plates by moving veggies from side to the main. And it’s not just plant-based meat options anymore either. Consumers are also looking for plant-based seafood, plant-based eggs, as well as other sources of protein, such as legumes and grains.

For those who aren’t fully ready to embrace the plant-based lifestyle, and who are simply plant-curious, there is a new movement called reducetariansim. Whereas flexitarians primarily eat plants with the occasional inclusion of meat, eggs, and dairy, reducetarians mindfully and gradually reduce their consumption of these animal products with respect to their own diet. When animal products are on the menu, reducetarians make them count, opting for premium grass-fed meat and pasture-raised eggs.

“We really can’t get plant-based options on the menu fast enough right now,” said Chef Bob Bankert, University of Massachusetts, during the webinar.



A SIMPLE GRILLED ARTICHOKE COUPLED WITH GREEN GODDESS DRESSING, GRILLED LEMON, AND SMOKED SALT WAS BEAUTIFULLY SMOKY, SALTY, TART, CREAMY, AND A DELICIOUS FIRST COURSE AT GLORIETTA RESTAURANT IN JACKSON, WY. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR

THESE GRILLED MOCHI SKEWERS WITH SWEET SOY SAUCE GLAZE FROM GEMMA MATSUYAMA, PASTRY CHEF AT TSUBAKI/OTOTO IN LOS ANGELES, CA, ARE A UNIQUE TAKE ON STREET FOOD. PHOTO COURTESY KIKKOMAN



## TAKING IT TO THE STREETS

Street food is often defined as the international snacks from Asia, Mexico, and Africa, which are prepared on the street, in food trucks, or at local markets using mostly regional ingredients. However, the idea of street food has evolved recently to also include restaurant and catering menus. Everything from tacos to elote to bao buns to street desserts are popping up everywhere via butler passed bites, plated meals, and action stations.

“Food is décor, and for a caterer street food just makes so much sense,” said Michael Stavros, with M Culinary Concepts, during his food trends session during Catersource + The Special Event 2021. “But now street foods need to be elevated a little bit. We can dress it up, we can make it fun, and we can make it elegant.”



[ABOVE] NOTHING SAYS STREET FOOD QUITE LIKE TACOS. SHOWN HERE, FROM SAILOR OYSTER BAR, ARE LAMB TACOS WITH OOLONG BRAISED AMERICAN LAMB LEG, DUCK FAT TORTILLAS, HARISSA, AND SMOKED OYSTER CHIMICHURRI. PHOTO COURTESY BUZZ ORR MULTIMEDIA



[LEFT] BAO BUNS ARE A CENTURIES-OLD CHINESE STREET FOOD THAT MAY AS WELL HAVE BEEN CUSTOM-MADE FOR TODAY’S GRAB-AND-GO WORLD. SAVORY OR SWEET, VEGGIE OR MEAT, BAO BUNS ARE A BLANK CANVAS FOR FLAVOR.





AT OWAMNI IN MINNEAPOLIS, NAMED ONE OF THE NEW YORK TIMES' TOP 50 NEW RESTAURANTS FOR 2021, NON-ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES SHINE ON THE MENU. SHOWN: (FRONT) ANIIBIMIN, A COMBINATION OF CRANBERRY, CRABAPPLE, BALSAM FIR AND SUMAC. (BEHIND) BAGESAAN, WITH PLUM, ELDERBERRY, CINCHONA, SARSAPARILLA, BURDOCK, AND VANILLA. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR

## BUZZ-LESS BOOZE

Whereas 2021 was all about the high-octane cocktails as customers opted for indulgence on the heels of the pandemic, 2022 will once again see temperance cocktails hit bar menus around the country, and more specifically we will see a rise in alcohol-free spirits.

"It's not just people who don't drink at all, but there are some people who just don't want to drink as much," said Derek Brown with Spiritless during TOTC.

With so many non-alcoholic spirits available on the market (Seedlip, Spiritless, and Damrak) we have entered a new world of temperance cocktails that provides not only the taste, but also the sophistication of traditional cocktails without the buzz.

"Ultimately we want to make sure whatever we pass over the bar is delicious," said Lauren Paylor, R&D Production Chef for Silver Lyan in Washington D.C., during TOTC. "Right now we have to unlearn how we think about approaching this category because it shouldn't be an afterthought placed at the back of the menu. It takes time and care, and we should honor that."

Laura Lashley, National Education Manager for Seedlip, agrees.

"It needs to taste like an adult beverage, and not just a bunch of juice in a glass," she said during TOTC. "It's not necessarily so much about exactly replacing flavors as considering the whole picture. We need to stop trying to think of these products in terms of what they don't have and compensating for them in drinks, and actually really understand what flavors they are contributing and thinking about your drink holistically that way."



2022 WILL CONTINUE TO SEE THE RISE OF TEMPERANCE COCKTAILS THAT PROVIDE NOT ONLY THE TASTE, BUT ALSO THE SOPHISTICATION OF TRADITIONAL COCKTAILS WITHOUT THE BUZZ.



PEANUT BUTTER MOUSSE WAS SERVED DURING THE INTERNATIONAL FOODSERVICE EDITORIAL COUNCIL CONFERENCE IN ANNAPOLIS. PHOTO COURTESY BUZZ ORR MULTIMEDIA

## BLAST FROM THE PAST

Nostalgia will be the name of the game in the world of desserts of 2022 as retro desserts from the '80s and '90s (cherry bakewell, lemon drizzle, and sticky toffee pudding) are sought out for their emotional ties to childhood memories and simpler times.

Fantasy-inspired desserts (unicorn, mermaid, bubblegum and rainbow) should also be on the radar for their sense of escapism, driven by social media and appealing visuals.



NOSTALGIA WILL BE THE NAME OF THE GAME IN THE WORLD OF DESSERTS FOR 2022 AS RETRO DESSERTS FROM THE '80S AND '90S (CHERRY BAKEWELL, LEMON DRIZZLE, AND STICKY TOFFEE PUDDING) HIT MENUS.



## MINDFUL EATING

After all the indulgence that became the norm over the past year, 2022 will look to those foods that achieve mind-body balance. With a re-emergence of mindful eating inspired by ancient practices and beliefs, such as Ayurveda, the focus will be on choosing the right combination of foods, herbs, and flavors that reach specific goals in healing and pleasure. For example, cardamom, ginger, cinnamon, clove, and nutmeg are considered warming spices and offer a comforting inner balance. Additionally, intentional eating will also embrace the idea of incorporating the six tastes (sweet, sour, salty, bitter, astringent, and pungent) into a single meal. 

2022 WILL FOCUS ON CHOOSING THE RIGHT COMBINATION OF FOODS, HERBS, AND FLAVORS THAT REACH SPECIFIC GOALS IN HEALING AND PLEASURE.



POTTED DUCK FROM OWAMNI IN MINNEAPOLIS, WAS ON POINT WITH PRESERVED DUCK, PURPLE SWEET POTATO, BALSAM FIR, ROSEHIP, AND CORN FLATBREAD. THE MENU WAS DEVELOPED TO FEATURE ONLY INDIGENOUS FOOD, PRIORITIZING PURCHASING FROM INDIGENOUS FOOD PRODUCERS FIRST, AND ALSO SUPPORTS THE MINNESOTA REGION'S "AMAZING AND DIVERSE FOOD GROWERS." FOR THOSE CONSUMERS WHO ARE INTERESTED IN MORE HEALTHFUL—AND MINDFUL—EATING, THE APPROACH THIS RESTAURANT TAKES IN ONLY SERVING PRE-COLONIAL FOODSTUFFS MAKES THIS ONE OF THE TOP NEW RESTAURANTS OF 2021. PHOTO COURTESY KATHLEEN STOEHR



INTENTIONAL EATING WILL EMBRACE THE IDEA OF INCORPORATING THE SIX TASTES INTO A MEAL





## Is Your Catering Menu Ready for the “New Normal?”

### PRE-COVID

**ABC Company:** “Hi, I’d like to place a catering order for tomorrow. We need a hot breakfast and lunch for 35 people. We’d also like some light hors d’oeuvres in the afternoon. Maybe some cheese and crackers and vegetable crudité. I was hoping to get everything individually-packaged, as opposed to buffet style.”

**XYZ Catering:** “Um, we’d be happy to cater hot breakfast and lunch and some afternoon hors d’oeuvres. We don’t do individually packaged hot meals or hors d’oeuvres, however. If you want to order individual box lunches with a sandwich, we can accommodate that. But the hot breakfast and lunch would be delivered in disposable foil pans. We could set them up in wire-rimmed chafing dishes at an additional charge. The cheese and crackers and vegetable crudite would

be presented on black plastic platters.

**ABC Company:** “Hmm...my boss said our client has requested everything be individually packaged. You can’t do that?”

**XYZ Catering:** “I’m really sorry. It’s just not how catering is done.”

### NOW

**ABC Company:** “Hi, I’d like to place a catering order for tomorrow. We need a hot breakfast and lunch for 35 people. We’d also like some light hors d’oeuvres in the afternoon. Maybe some cheese and crackers and vegetable crudité. I was hoping to get everything individually-packaged, as opposed to buffet style.”

**XYZ Catering:** “We’d be happy to accommodate that. Have you had a chance to look at our Individually-packaged menu?”

COVID-19 has clearly changed the way people order food. Individually packaged meals are more work, expense, and hassle. They present new delivery and logistical challenges. The pandemic has changed the model of corporate drop-off catering and even home delivery. It has spawned new vernaculars such as “curbside pickup” and “contactless delivery.” One third-party delivery portal reports that demand for individually packaged menus has doubled since the pandemic disrupted our industry.

As business owners, you have a choice. You can say, “this certainly sucks” (and it does) and stay the course of buffet-style service only. Or you can pivot (another COVID-induced catchphrase), which is what successful entrepreneurs do. When the direction of the wind changes, they adjust their sails. This is not to say that “buffet-style” needs



“FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE IF YOU CHOOSE NOT TO EMBRACE THE MARKET DEMAND OF INDIVIDUALLY **PACKAGED MEALS BEING PART OF THE ‘NEW NORMAL,’ YOU COULD BE JEOPARDIZING THE SURVIVAL AND FUTURE SUCCESS OF YOUR BUSINESS.**”

to be scrubbed from your menus. For some corporate clients, it is still the preferred way of having their group meals delivered. Over time, it will probably return to the norm. For the foreseeable future, however, if you choose not to embrace the market demand of individually packaged meals being part of the “new normal,” you could be jeopardizing the survival and future success of your business.

Here are four tips for creating an individually packaged menu:

**1. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.** You do not need to blow up your existing menu and start from scratch. We talk to dozens of caterers across the country every week. Customers are still ordering from the traditional buffet menus, and this trend should continue to increase during the fall.

**2. Start small by adding a separate individually packaged menu.**

Create a scaled-down version of your current offerings into a separate individual-packaged menu. Offer a continental bagged breakfast. If a customer wants to order 20 individual continental breakfasts, consider:

- (10) Bagels, sliced in half and cling wrapped, with PCs of butter, jelly, and cream cheese. Bag labeled “Bagel”
- (10) Muffins, cling wrapped, with PCs of butter. Bag labeled “Muffin”
- All 20 include an individual fruit salad and 10oz. bottle of Tropicana orange juice.

- Coffee service on the side, per usual
- For the once un-thinkable individual hot breakfast, offer a breakfast burrito, bacon or sausage, and home-fries in a microwavable take-out container.

For lunch, if you don't already offer individually boxed or bag lunches, now is the time to add them. They usually consist of a sandwich or salad and additional (in the box or bag) items such as pasta salad, potato chips, fruit salad or whole fruit, and an individually wrapped cookie or brownie. For beverages, you could bring a variety on the side or include a bottle of spring water in the box or bag, which will always yield the highest profit margin of any single item on your menu.

If your menu includes hot entrees, offer a few of your most popular choices that travel well such as lasagna, chicken parmesan, and steak tips in three-compartment individual take-out microwavable packaging with a snap-on lid. Include a starch and vegetable or salad in the two smaller compartments. To boost that check average, offer a side green salad with individual dressing.

Individual take-out containers could

also fit the bill for room-temperature entrees such as grilled chicken, beef, and salmon, and for certain hors d'oeuvres, such as cheese and crackers, vegetable crudite, and nacho chips with salsa and guacamole.

**3. Adjust your pricing.** Remember, we never announce price increases. Occasionally, we will institute price adjustments based on market conditions. (No doubt you've noticed the price of food has spiked over the last year). Adjusting pricing on your individually packaged meals will help offset some of the additional labor and packaging costs.

**Tip:** Consider the pre-wrapped fork, knife, napkin, salt, and pepper packet packaging.

**4. Let them know.** Once your individually packaged menu is complete, get it on your website. Consider a new navigation link for this menu. Get it in print for tastings. If you have a retail establishment, put the new menus next to your registers, blast it out through social media, and shout it from the rooftops. Let the world know that you are ready, willing, and able to cater in the age of The New Normal. 



**Michael Rosman** is the founder of [www.TheCorporateCaterer.com](http://www.TheCorporateCaterer.com), a consulting, coaching, and lead generation company for businesses that aspire to begin a corporate drop-off catering division or take their existing one to the next level. He can be reached directly at [michael@thecorporatecaterer.com](mailto:michael@thecorporatecaterer.com) or 781.589.2394.

SOI 2022

# Maxed Out

## *Flexible Staffing Solutions to Avoid Event Peak Burnout.*

While the catering industry is on the road to recovery, there continue to be obstacles in our new normal. One pressing issue that all caterers across the country—and the globe—have had to battle with is staffing. Owners and managers are working harder than ever to ensure that service standards are up to par with fewer staff than ever before. This past month, the International Caterers Association (ICA) hosted a roundtable event for caterers and staffing suppliers to discuss how to best remedy this staffing crisis as we continue to build back and approach peak season over the holidays.

### Three ways to staff your catering business

As we look ahead, there are three ways you can start to staff your catering business for events as we approach the holiday season—not only to ensure you have the team you need to execute flawless events, but also so you don't burn out the team you have!

#### *In-house, full-time staff*

Team members are guaranteed a minimum number of hours a week. As business returns, they may need to work in a versatile role that includes both administrative and service roles to fill that 40-hour workweek.

#### *In-house, part-time staff*

Those on a permanent roster for event staffing.

#### *Temp & staffing agencies*

Banquet servers, line chefs, etc. hired via an agency for a specific event on an as-needed basis.

While we'd all love to be able to have a fully staffed team with an in-house roster of dedicated employees, it's not the reality as our industry recovers.

How can you best use these options as you continue to build back? Use temp agencies you trust and when you can, invest in talent that will grow with your team.



### Not all staffing agencies are created equal

Most caterers will have to utilize a temp staffing agency as bookings begin to increase due to the current staffing shortage. This helps avoid overtime and fills the gaps as needed. But it is important to remember that not all staffing agencies are created equal, and you want to hire an agency you can trust to provide you with skilled, professional, and well-trained individuals—or will allow you to provide the training required.

A few caterers on the ICA Roundtable call discussed working with a staffing company called Instawork, a platform built specifically for the hospitality industry with a network of over one million temp staff for front of house and back of house staffing needs. The staff in their network are reviewed for qualifications with references checked to ensure greater reliability.

Marcia Selden Catering & Events shared that they offer quarterly training sessions with their local temp agencies to ensure the staff working with them are up to speed. Similarly, Instawork provides skill tests, training videos provided by individual caterers, and the capability to share diagrams, send uniforms, etc. to help take some of the work away from your catering team.

### Long-term growth

If your business is starting to boom and you're ready to take the next step toward growing your team, you must have practices in place to hire the right team members who will want to stay and grow with your business.

Tony Santos, chef/owner of Tony Caters in the San Francisco Bay Area, had a few tips they use for attracting



“While we’d all love to be able to have a fully staffed team with an in-house roster of dedicated employees, it’s not the reality we’re living in as our industry recovers.”

and retaining talent in this fluid environment:

#### *Implement pay increases*

Unfortunately, minimum wage isn’t going to cut it anymore if you want team members to stay. Tony Caters recently increased pay by 20 to 25% to retain top talent.

#### *Offer benefits for full-time employees*

Full-time team members need to be offered benefits including an IRA, ample paid time off to recuperate and rejuvenate, healthcare, and more.

#### *Add DiSC® profiles to your interview process*

When hiring full-time staff, they have added this well-known behavioral profile assessment to ensure an individual is a good cultural fit for the organization. The assessments also provide insight as to which roles would be a good fit for certain individuals based upon their unique personality type.

#### *Craft on-call lists for worst-case scenarios*

Maybe you have old team members who were furloughed and got new jobs they enjoy. Perhaps you have college age employees coming back for a winter break. Add these reliable team members to an on-call list so you can reach out at times when you

need additional help with staffing.

Ask friends, family, and the local community to join your team.

Tony Caters went out into the community and asked everyone they knew if they wanted to be a part of the team. Family, friends, college kids looking for a side hustle, fellow members at the local health club—you name it, they asked. These are the people you know you can trust, and it resulted in some fruitful hires!

These practices have helped Tony Caters to hire qualified team members who are in for the long haul. Put into place, these ideas can do the same for your catering business!

### **Treat your employees how you want them to treat your guests**

Most importantly, with all employees—full-time, part-time or repeat contract hires—you must remember to thank those who show up.

To prevent burnout and show appreciation, ensure you are allowing days for rest, give them a party to celebrate milestones, and say thank you when you pass them on the floor. Treat them well, and they will treat your guests well! Your employees are the key to getting those return clients. 



TONY SANTOS, CHEF AND OWNER OF TONY CATERS IN SAN FRANCISCO. PHOTO COURTESY TONY CATERS

**Marcia Selden Catering & Events, and Tony Caters** are proud members of the ICA. For more information, visit [internationalcaterers.org](http://internationalcaterers.org).

# All Hail *the* Humble Potato

I had the very good fortune to accompany the Idaho Potato Commission on a two-day tour of the Fall 2021 potato harvest where in any given year, about 13.5 billion pounds of potatoes are pulled from the 315,000 dedicated acres in that state. That's about a third of the overall potato production in the U.S.

Potatoes, of course, are a catering staple. They hold well and reheat beautifully, can be adapted to nearly any kind of cuisine, are inexpensive, vegan, vegetarian, gluten free and can be starters, entrees—desserts, even!

They can be served cold, hot, baked, boiled, roasted, mashed, fried, sliced, and riced. Satisfying and fulfilling, potatoes ring about every dinner bell possible in the catering world.

*All recipes and photos courtesy of  
Idaho Potato Commission and each  
individual recipe author.*

**CREATE COTIJA POTATO NESTS**  
WITH PEELED AND SHREDDED  
YUKON GOLD POTATOES, THEN FILL  
WITH MICRO GREENS, SMOKED SALMON,  
AND CREAMY CHIPOTLE DRESSING.  
*Source: Ericka Sanchez, Nibbles and Feasts*







## How to Open a Baked Potato

According to Savannah Hoff, daughter of fourth generation Idaho potato farmer, James Hoff, the “very critical step” in serving a baked potato is to first give it a little “massage,” to make the inside “nice and fluffy.” Demonstrating, she noted that you should be able to feel the potato break down a little bit inside, but not break open.

Next, zig zag with a fork across the top, not too deep—just enough to pierce the skin—and then follow those edges with a knife to just barely break those fork lines open. “And then, when the guest pops the potato open, a fluffy interior is revealed.”

The next time you pick up a potato, please think about what a difficult growing season we had in 2021: rising temperatures, wildfires, debilitating wind, drought... and yet, our farming community worked hard to bring us beautiful, viable crops. It's a true miracle to watch food come straight from the ground, in abundance, in the direst of conditions—and then cleaned, packaged, and shipped to every corner of the world.

And so, in celebration of the potato in all iterations, please consider putting one of these tasty treats on your next catering menu. 



## POTATO ROULADE

Recipe author: David Knight, Kilted Chef LLC

### INGREDIENTS

6 large Idaho® Russet potatoes, peeled  
6 each duck legs  
3 lbs duck fat  
18 oz (by weight) dried sour cherries  
8 oz (by weight) dried black currants  
18 fluid oz brandy  
12 oz (by weight) dried morel mushrooms  
10 oz butter  
3 lbs baby spinach, washed  
12 cloves garlic, minced  
2 lbs fresh microgreens  
Salt

### DIRECTIONS FOR POTATO 'TUBE'

1. Use a spiral cutter to spin the potatoes to create the long strands needed to form the tube. Using a 12" length of aluminum foil, fold it lengthwise until it is 6" wide.
2. Wrap the 12" x 6" piece of aluminum foil around a cardboard tube from a paper towel roll and paper clip the ends of the foil so it doesn't unravel.
3. Loosely wrap the long strands of potato around the foil then slide the foil off the cardboard tube being careful not to crush the foil form.
4. Fry the potato tube while wrapped around the foil in 325°F oil until lightly golden, making sure to turn the potato tube while frying so it colors evenly.
5. Remove from oil and place on paper towels to drain.
6. Remove the paper clips off the ends of the foil and collapse the foil to remove from inside the potato tube.

### DIRECTIONS FOR DUCK CONFIT

1. Pat the duck legs dry with paper towels.
2. Prick the skin all over with the tip of a knife. This allows the underlying fat to run out when heated.
3. Liberally salt the duck legs all over, cover and let rest at room temperature for 30 minutes.
4. Wipe the excess salt with a paper towel and place the duck legs in a casserole dish just big enough to hold the legs.
5. Spoon the solid duck fat evenly over the top of the duck legs. Cover the casserole with aluminum foil and place in a cold oven.
6. Turn the oven on to 285°F. Do not preheat the oven. Let the legs slowly warm up with the oven.

7. After one hour remove the foil and cook for one hour more. Remove from the oven. Let cool for 15 minutes.
8. Remove the legs from the fat and remove the skins. The skins can be crisped in the oven and eaten as a chip.
9. The leftover fat will be used to sauté the spinach and morel mushrooms. Pick the meat off the legs and lightly shred.

### DIRECTIONS FOR BRANDIED CHERRIES AND BLACK CURRANTS

Soak the cherries and currants in the brandy covered overnight at room temperature.

### DIRECTIONS FOR MOREL MUSHROOMS

1. Gently rehydrate mushrooms with 2 oz of water.
2. Remove the mushrooms from the water before they become too soft.
3. Rough chop the mushrooms after they are rehydrated.

### ASSEMBLY

1. Heat 6 oz of butter in a large sauté pan over medium high heat until the

butter foams but is not brown.

2. Add the garlic and spinach. Sauté until all the spinach is wilted.
3. Place the spinach/garlic on a paper towel to drain.
4. Heat 4 oz of butter in the same pan and add the duck confit.
5. Sauté to reheat the duck and add a little color, add the spinach back to the pan and toss with the duck. Add the mushroom and sauté over a medium flame for one minute. Remove all the ingredients from the pan.
6. Add the cherry/currants in brandy off the flame and return the sauté pan to the flame. The brandy may flambé so be careful. It's not a bad thing if it does.
7. Reduce any liquids until they are almost all gone. Add the duck/garlic spinach/mushroom mix back to the pan and combine with the cherry/currants.
8. Toss in the fresh microgreens. Spoon the mixture into the Potato Tube.
9. Use the reduced liquid in the pan to sauce the plate.







## CURRIED POTATO POT STICKERS

YIELD: 50 POT STICKERS

Recipe author: Lisa Lin,  
Healthy Nibbles and Bits

### INGREDIENTS

- 1 lb Idaho® Russet potatoes, peeled and diced to one-inch chunks
- 1½ T olive oil
- 1⅓ cups diced yellow onion
- 2 tsp minced ginger
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- ¾ tsp salt
- ¾ cup diced red bell pepper (about ½ medium pepper)
- ¾ cup peas (fresh or frozen)
- 2 stalks of scallions (green onion), minced
- 1½ tsp curry powder
- About 50 pot sticker or dumpling wrappers

### DIRECTIONS

1. Boil potatoes in a pot with a generous pinch of salt. Cook until potatoes are easily pierced with a fork. Drain water and mash potatoes. Set aside to cool.
2. Heat a small pan with 1½ T of oil over medium heat. Add onions and cook for about two minutes. Add ginger, garlic, and a pinch of salt, and cook for 30 seconds, until fragrant. Mix in diced red pepper and cook for two minutes. Add peas and scallions and cook for one minute. Turn off heat.
3. Mix mashed potatoes, curry powder, and vegetables. Taste and adjust seasonings to your liking.
4. Fill a small bowl with water. You'll use this to help seal the pot stickers.
5. Dip wrapper into water, about ¼ to ½ inch deep. Circle wrapper around so that the edges are moist. Lay wrapper on your left hand, wet side away from you. Add about a spoonful of filling. Using your right hand, start sealing dumpling by pinching wrapper together. Using your index fingers, pinch moistened side into a pleat and press down to seal. Continue until the entire dumpling is pleated and sealed.
6. To cook them, heat a large sauté pan with a tablespoon of oil over medium-high heat. When the pan is hot, line the pot stickers in the pan, bottom side down. Have the lid of your pan ready for the next step. Let the pot stickers fry for about a minute, then pour about ¼ cup of water in the pan. The oil will start splattering, so cover pan immediately with the lid. Cook for about five minutes. Make sure that your wrapper fully cooks. Uncover lid and cook for another minute, until the bottoms of the dumplings are deep golden brown.
7. Plate and serve pot stickers with your favorite dipping sauce.

### IDAHO® RUSSET POTATOES

MAKE A BEAUTIFUL AND TASTY DUMPLING WHEN FILLED WITH GOAT CHEESE AND SHIITAKE MUSHROOM RAGOUT.

Source: Norbert Bomm, Morrison Management Specialists





## Mashed Potato Bar?

Honestly, you might be tired of proposing it, but clients are still crazy about the mashed potato and all its delicious topping possibilities. Here are some topping ideas from Erica Moore of Bonne Bouffe Catering, Los Angeles, CA that could take a potato bar from appetizer to hearty meal.

- Sour cream
- Chopped scallions
- Black caviar
- Sautéed wild mushrooms
- Olive tapenade
- Crumbled hickory bacon
- Finely shredded cheese
- Steamed broccoli
- Garlic sautéed rock shrimp
- Whipped butter
- Sautéed turkey sausage with cranberries and sage
- Hearty basil pesto
- Grilled zucchini and summer squash
- Caramelized onions
- Spicy duck sausage with cilantro and spices
- Artichoke hearts
- Freshly grated parmesan
- Chopped tomato salsa with capers, basil, and cilantro
- Crumbled gorgonzola
- Sundried tomatoes
- Julienne of rosemary chicken
- Caramelized jewel-colored peppers
- Sweet Italian chicken sausage
- Crisp potato ribbons
- Roasted Japanese eggplant slivers
- Onion confit
- Poached lobster
- Toasted pumpkin seeds
- Jalapenos, sliced
- Norwegian smoked salmon
- Hearts of palm
- Grilled tri-tip sliced thin
- Horseradish crème
- Onion crisps
- Country gravy
- Fresh corn
- Roasted & diced poblanos



**"ON A STICK" POTATO LOLLIPOPS**  
ARE TAKEN A STEP FURTHER WITH A DIPPING SAUCE TRIO OF BACON-MUSTARD AIOLI, CHEDDAR-BÉCHAMEL, AND ARUGULA CRÈME SAUCES. SMALL, ROUND COOKERS CUTTERS KEEP THE SLICES PERFECTLY ROUND. BE SURE TO SOAK CUT POTATOES BRIEFLY IN COOL WATER TO PREVENT THEM FROM DISCOLORING.  
Source: Bart Ho





## VANILLA BEAN & PURPLE PERUVIAN POTATO ICE CREAM WITH CINNAMON SUGAR POTATO CHIPS

Recipe author: Greg Hardesty, Recess and Room Four

### INGREDIENTS FOR ICE CREAM

- 2 vanilla beans, split lengthwise
- 1 cup whole milk
- 2 cups heavy whipping cream
- Pinch of salt
- $\frac{3}{4}$  cups plus 2 tablespoons, divided, sugar
- 9 egg yolks
- 3 cups Purple Peruvian potato puree (below)
- 1 Idaho® Russet potato, peeled and thinly sliced on mandolin
- 1 Idaho® purple Peruvian potato, peeled and thinly sliced on mandolin
- 3 cups peanut oil for frying
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon, ground
- 1 cup whipped cream, lightly sweetened (optional)

### INGREDIENTS FOR PURPLE PERUVIAN POTATO PUREE

- 15 to 20 Idaho® purple Peruvian potatoes, medium, unpeeled
- Pinch of salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  cups sugar

### DIRECTIONS FOR ICE CREAM

1. Scrape seeds from vanilla beans with a paring knife. Heat milk, cream, salt,  $\frac{3}{4}$  cups sugar and vanilla beans (seeds and pod) in a sauce pan. Cover, remove from heat, and let steep for 10 minutes.
2. In a separate bowl, stir together egg yolks. Gradually pour some of the milk mixture into the yolk, whisking constantly. Scrape warmed yolks and milk back into the saucepan. Add

potato purée and cook over medium low heat, stirring constantly with a wooden spoon until thick and mixture coats the back of the spoon. Strain potato custard through a fine-mesh strainer and cool completely. Reserve  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup custard for garnish.

3. Freeze remaining custard in your ice cream maker according to manufactures instructions.

### DIRECTIONS FOR CHIPS

1. Rinse potato slices until water runs clear. Squeeze out as much moisture as possible.
2. Heat oil in a saucepan to 300 degrees F. Fry potatoes until golden brown and crisp. Drain well and toss in a bowl with 2 T sugar and cinnamon while still warm. Set aside to cool.

### DIRECTIONS FOR PURPLE PERUVIAN POTATO PUREE

1. Scrub clean potatoes. Cover potatoes with water and add salt and sugar. Bring to a simmer and cook until potatoes are soft. Transfer to a food processor and puree until smooth. Push potato pulp through a mesh strainer and reserve.

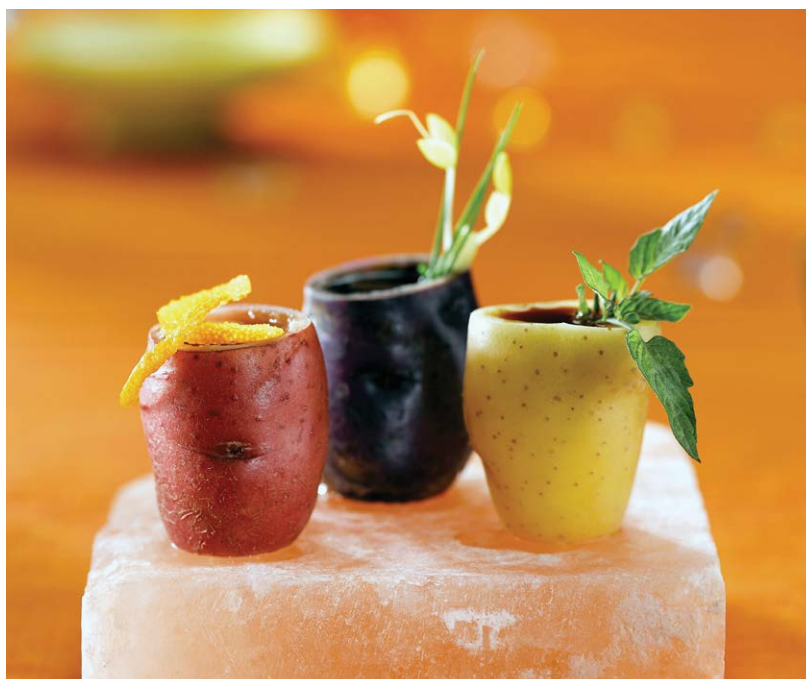
### ASSEMBLY

Put a scoop of ice cream into four dessert bowls. Drizzle with reserved purple custard and place whipped cream and crispy cinnamon potatoes around the ice cream. Serve immediately.

**WHEN SERVING POTATO VODKA OR A BLOODY MARY SHOT, WHAT BETTER WAY TO MAKE THE EXPERIENCE MORE DELIGHTFUL THAN USING COLORFUL FINGERLINGS AS THE VESSEL?** ADD POTATOES TO BOILING WATER AND COOK UNTIL A TOOTHPICK MAY BE INSERTED INTO EACH POTATO WITH LITTLE FORCE, 12 TO 15 MINUTES. POTATOES SHOULD BE TENDER BUT STILL FIRM TO THE TOUCH. CHILL IN ICE BATH.

TRIM EACH POTATO TO CREATE A FLAT BOTTOM. CUT OFF TOP, LEAVING AT LEAST 2 INCHES OF POTATO. USING A SHARP PARING KNIFE, CARVE OUT INTERIOR OF EACH POTATO TO CREATE A "SHOT GLASS." CAREFULLY REMOVE INTERIOR OF POTATO TO LEAVE A WALL OF AT LEAST  $\frac{1}{8}$  INCH. THOROUGHLY CHILL POTATO "SHOT GLASSES" IN AIRTIGHT CONTAINER.

Source: Joy Perrine, *Equus & Jack's Lounge*







## POTATO GNOCCI

*Recipe author: Brian Moses, Launderette*

### INGREDIENTS FOR POTATO GNOCCI

**YIELD: 12 SERVINGS (ABOUT 150 GNOCCI)**

4 lbs Idaho® Russet potatoes, scrubbed, not peeled  
2 cups all-purpose flour, plus more for dusting  
2 whole eggs  
2 egg yolks  
2 T olive oil  
2 tsp kosher salt  
Semolina flour for dusting

### INGREDIENTS FOR PEA TENDRIL & SPINACH PURÉE

**YIELD 3 CUPS (24 OZ);**

**USE ¼ CUP PER SERVING**

12 oz fresh pea tendrils, lightly packed  
6 oz fresh spinach, lightly packed  
¼ cup canola oil  
2 tsp kosher salt

### SAUCE PER SERVING

2 T butter  
1 tsp garlic, minced  
1 tsp shallot, minced  
¼ cup white wine  
¼ cup pea tendril and spinach purée  
1 cup snap peas, trimmed  
½ cup fresh green peas, shelled

### GARNISH

Shaved Parmesan cheese  
Extra virgin olive oil

### DIRECTIONS FOR GNOCCI

1. Prick each potato once or twice with the tip of a knife. Place on a tray or on oven rack and bake at 400°F until centers are soft, 45 to 60 minutes. Remove skins while warm.
2. Working quickly with warm potatoes, push through a ricer or food mill into a large bowl or onto a lightly floured work surface.
3. Whisk together eggs, yolks, and oils in a small bowl. Pour over potatoes and mix in with hands or large silicone spatula, while gradually adding about 2 cups flour, working just enough to form a soft dough. Do not over work.
4. Before proceeding, test-cook a few gnocchi in boiling salted water. Allow to cook until they rise to the surface, usually three to four minutes. Cooked gnocchi should be light and pillowy. If too soft, work in a little more flour to the remaining dough before proceeding.
5. Divide dough into 12 equal pieces. Keep the dough covered while rolling gnocchi.
6. Working on a flour-dusted work surface, roll one piece of dough into a rope ½- to ¾-inch diameter. Using a floured bench scraper, cut into one-inch pieces. If desired, roll each piece on the back of a fork to make indent lines.
7. Place rolled gnocchi on semolina flour-dusted sheet pan while preparing remaining gnocchi. Cover tightly with plastic if not using

immediately. May be refrigerated up to one day but best to use immediately.

8. Bring a large pot of salted water to a boil. Working in batches, or cooking per serving, drop the gnocchi into boiling water and cook as directed above. Remove from water with a slotted spoon or large mesh sieve. Serve immediately or transfer to a sheet pan to cool.

If not serving immediately, cover and refrigerate. Reheat in a skillet with butter until lightly browned.

### DIRECTIONS FOR PEA TENDRIL & SPINACH PURÉE

1. Blanch pea tendrils and spinach in boiling salted water for three minutes. Drain and transfer to an ice water bath. When cool, drain well.
2. Blend with oil and salt in a blender or processor until smooth. Store refrigerated in a covered container for up to three days.

### SAUCE PER SERVING, À LA MINUTE

1. Melt butter in a skillet over medium heat; sauté garlic and shallot until softened.
2. Add wine and simmer until reduced by about half.
3. Stir in ¼ cup Pea Tendril Purée, peas, and snap peas. Cook just until peas are tender-crisp, adding a few tsp of hot gnocchi water if needed to thin sauce.
4. Spoon sauce over hot boiled or browned gnocchi. Garnish with Parmesan, fresh black pepper, and a drizzle of olive oil.





**CHOCOLATE POTATO DONUTS** ARE NESTLED IN A SCOOP OF CRÈME ANGLAISE.  
*Source: John Gorham, Toro Bravo*



**TATER TOTS FRIED UP IN DUCK FAT** AND PAIRED WITH A DELICIOUS GREEN GODDESS DRESSING ELEVATE THE POTATO TO NEW HEIGHTS OF DELICIOUSNESS. AS ALWAYS, OTHER FATS CAN BE USED TO FRY THE TOTS. KEEP IT VEGETARIAN WITH CANOLA OIL; BACON OR PORK FAT PROVIDES A SALTINESS THAT WILL KEEP CLIENTS SALIVATING..  
*Source: Matt Broussard, A Cook Named Matt*



**SHEPARD'S PIE SPOONFULS** USE DEHYDRATED POTATO FLAKES FOR EASE IN PREPARATION.  
*Source: Erika Penzer Kerekes, In Erikas Kitchen*



“TARGETED ASKS FOR REFERRALS, STRONG RELATIONSHIPS WITH EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTIONS, UNCONVENTIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, AND EXPLORING THE USE OF A RECRUITER ARE ALL STRATEGIES BEING UTILIZED RIGHT NOW TO REACH A BIGGER TALENT POOL.

## The Art of Staffing Post-Pandemic

**It is no secret that hiring is currently one of the biggest challenges facing our industry.** More than four million people in hospitality lost their jobs through the pandemic and the estimates show that a quarter of those people will not return to the industry. Combine this with an influx of people leaving their jobs and many other industries searching for talent and you have an uphill battle for catering companies across the nation.

I am consistently hearing that hiring is extremely difficult and is the number one thing limiting the recovery of caterers. When we are faced with significant challenges, we have two choices. We can complain about our situation and seek sympathy from those around us about how difficult it is, or we can choose to innovate and face those challenges head on.

Hiring is one of the most essential functions for businesses. Adding the right people to your team can make the difference between capitalizing on growth opportunities and being stuck spinning your wheels. Bad hiring decisions continue to be the leading cause of turnover within

organizations and will cost a company a significant amount of time, energy, and resources. As we navigate the recovery from the pandemic there are a few things we should keep in mind when it comes to attracting and hiring new team members.

### Expand the talent pool

Simply posting a job online and waiting for resumes to come in is not going to cut it. Companies must work harder to cast a wider net than they are accustomed to. Hiring is a numbers game and to make sure your talent pool is not full of mediocre candidates you must target



passive and sleeper candidates. Let me explain: Those are candidates that are not actively looking for a new job, but open to making a change if the right opportunity presents itself. They tend to be the best new hires and reaching them requires different thinking. Targeted asks for referrals, strong relationships with educational institutions, unconventional partnerships, and exploring the use of a recruiter are all strategies being utilized right now to reach a bigger talent pool.

### Creative job postings

Hiring managers need to be more creative as they advertise for open positions. For example, marketing departments are typically tasked with targeting new customers. This is an opportunity to use their skills and expertise to attract new team members. Having the marketing team assist with creatively designing job postings can lead to an ad that stands out among other postings and one that is more likely to be circulated by networks. The marketing department also might be able to help with brainstorming on how to reach the ideal candidates with those ads.

### Trust a process

Desperation hiring is a real problem. We are busier than ever, we needed someone yesterday, and we fall victim to hiring the best of what is in front of us—which in a pool of mediocre candidates ends up being the least mediocre. Designing a process for hiring helps to avoid this trap. The process may look different for each position. Hiring a server may be a two-step process whereas hiring an executive chef may have seven steps. Instead of comparing candidates

against one another, compare them against the process, trusting that if they make it through all the steps, you are ready to make an offer.

### Don't ask theoretical questions

I like to say that theoretical questions get theoretical responses. Once you have candidates in for an interview, it is important to solicit past examples. They are your greatest predictor of future behavior and performance. Instead of asking, "How would you handle..." or, "What would you do if..." ask "Tell me about a time when..." or, "Give me an example of a time when you had to..." Once you have asked those questions, do not forget to ask three to five specific follow up questions to ensure your understanding of their story matches what transpired.

### Test their abilities

During the last step in the interview process, we like to put a candidate in the job before they are in the job. This may take the form of a cooking interview, a written test, or having them prepare a mock event. Going through this process ensures that they understand what the job entails and that they have the ability to do it at a high level. We also like to include other team members during this portion of

the process to get their buy-in and see how the candidate interacts with them. How a chef treats other team members and works in a kitchen is much more important than what he or she prepares during a cooking interview.

Finding top talent is harder than it has been in a very long time. In addition to the suggestions above, creating a desirable workplace can be the differentiator that attracts people to your organization. The "great resignation" is also creating "the great attraction" where employees are looking to join companies that will invest in their success, create inclusive environments, and value them as a person. We spend a significant amount of time working with our clients and ensuring our events are executed flawlessly. It's time we match that investment of time in attracting and hiring new team members. 

### See Anthony Lambatos at Catersource 2022 + The Special Event

Don't miss any of Anthony Lambatos' sessions during Catersource + The Special Event this May.

Learn more at conference.  
[catersource.com](https://catersource.com).



**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.



# Salespeople Thrive on Structure

I would be remiss not to mention that 2020 and 2021 were years of challenges and resilience. While we saw plenty of people in our industry find success personally and professionally, we know the journey wasn't always easy. This pandemic brought the industry to its knees.

Chances are you have made some hard decisions in the last two years. You've had difficult conversations with your employees, your vendors, your bank, some conversations that you thought you would never have. Most of us continue to figure out what's ahead and how to best position ourselves and our businesses to handle it all.

But—we are here—we've made it through one of the most difficult times that our industry has seen since the Great Depression in 1929.

Our industry will recover from this crisis—no question about that. We already see the light ahead of us; weddings are back, corporations are slowly returning to their events.

## Setting goals

The struggle to make sales goals the best they can be and continue is one that every company faces. As such, developing a plan for sales growth as an ongoing activity can improve your sales and sanity.

A practical, profit-driven sales team is more important now than ever before, with most companies in dire need of recouping the losses from 2020.

You'll likely need to reevaluate the team's sales goals and introduce innovative tools, techniques, and strategies to get them on a winning path.

## Transform to perform

- Determine your company's goals. Start with historicals.
- Assess the market potential
- Evaluate your sales team
- Define your compensation structure
- Reward (realistic) stretch goals
- Meet bi-weekly with a salesperson

## Ask your salesperson

- How confident are you in your ability to achieve this goal?
- What would it mean to you if you were able to attain these objectives? How can I best manage and support you in achieving these objectives (personally/professionally)?
- How do you prefer to be recognized for a job well done?
- What could jeopardize your attempts to achieve these objectives?



# SOI 2022

- What kind of framework do you need to put in place to make sure you're doing the right things every day to help you achieve your goals while avoiding distractions?

- How can I keep you accountable for your goals in a positive way?

Salespeople thrive on structure; they want to know what is expected of them, how they can make more money, and whether it is a fair system.

The importance of individual sales goals gives your salespeople personalized attention, so they can perform at their peak. Achieving sales volume goals for a business is one of the greatest challenges any owner faces.

## Shift accountability to your team

A lot can be said about feeling like one "owns" one's work. If your employees don't feel empowered in your business, they'll become nothing more than passive order-takers who drop more failures on you than successes. A great leader is one that can delegate work, set expectations, step back, and hold their team members accountable. It's your responsibility to create a culture where your employees are equally responsible for their successes and failures! Once you do this, your team will be more engaged, and you will have more time to grow your business.

## Tracking

A steady stream of revenue is one of the most coveted assets in the business, and the pandemic has made us hyper-aware of this fact.

Tracking and accountability is a lot more than holding salespeople responsible for their sales. A sales manager's job is to coach each sales team member to their fullest potential.

In-depth 1-on-1 sales tracking sessions should be done in person with each salesperson every other week. This conversation takes about 20 to 30 minutes and focuses on goals, pipeline, meetings, and proposals. It is also a way to address issues a salesperson may be facing.

“ IF YOUR EMPLOYEES DON'T FEEL EMPOWERED IN YOUR BUSINESS, THEY'LL BECOME NOTHING MORE THAN PASSIVE ORDER-TAKERS WHO DROP MORE FAILURES ON YOU THAN SUCCESSES.

A meeting that neglects to define what achievement looks like and the reasonable action steps expected to arrive there is not a productive use of time. By holding routine meetings, you'll have the ability to spot issues, such as the following, early on.

- How much money is out on the street in proposals?
- How qualified is the event on a scale of 1-5?
- Where are they in the sales process?
- What's their definitive next step?
- What's their current closing ratio?

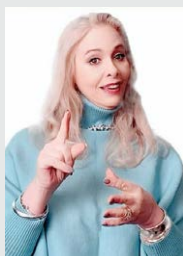
Employees resign a position when income, culture, degree of difficulty, or management practices are not to the salesperson's liking. One of the most crucial things a leader can do is motivate their team. Employees who lack direction are more likely to fail and suffer, unclear of what to do next or how to achieve their full potential. While no one can truly motivate others, a good leader may have a significant influence on individuals and support their drive and achievement.

Building a motivated team that actively prospects and sells the brand will be the single most crucial factor for success into 2022 and beyond. This is the perfect time for a fresh start, new concepts, new procedures, and new accountability. 

**See Meryl Snow at Catersource 2022 + The Special Event**

**Don't miss any of Meryl Snow's sessions during Catersource + The Special Event this May.**

**Learn more at conference. [catersource.com](https://catersource.com).**



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 member of the **Wedding Industry Speakers**, she speaks with groups from the heart with warmth and knowledge, and covers the funny side of life and business.

## STEAL THIS



*Fresh ideas to use or adapt at your next event.*

# GOOD THINGS COME IN SMALL PACKAGES

**Now that events are back**, guests have had enough of staff-attended buffets and plated meals. They are ready to mix up the events game by embracing the fun, the unique, and dare we say, the small? That's right! Small bites and sips are finding their way into events of all kinds—big or small, formal or informal—because not only do they offer a lot of ease when serving, but they also provide the chance for guests to try an assortment, without filling up in the process. Here are a few tiny additions you can incorporate into your next event!

—Amber Kispert

### ▼ Cherrywood bacon jam and brie crostini | Jones Dairy Farm

*Photo courtesy Jones Dairy Farm*



A trio of spicy cocktails: Cholula spicy pineapple margarita; Frank's Hot honey whiskey drink; and Old Bay hot sauce michelada | International Foodservice Editorial Council

*Photo courtesy Buzz Orr Multimedia*



▲ Fried Boursin cheese "curd" with red pepper pesto crema | Bel Brands

*Photo courtesy Boursin*





◀ A trio of lamb crostinis featuring lamb pastrami | Aussie Select

Photo courtesy Aussie Select



Bloody Mary shooters (olive oil, tomato, pepper jack cheese, olive and bacon) | Catania Oils

Photo courtesy Buzz Orr Multimedia



▲ Cherrywood bacon and water chestnut bites with orange thyme glaze | Jones Dairy Farm

Photo courtesy Jones Dairy Farm



Garlic & fine herb bagel bites | Chef Brad Kent, CCO, Blaze Pizza

Photo courtesy Boursin

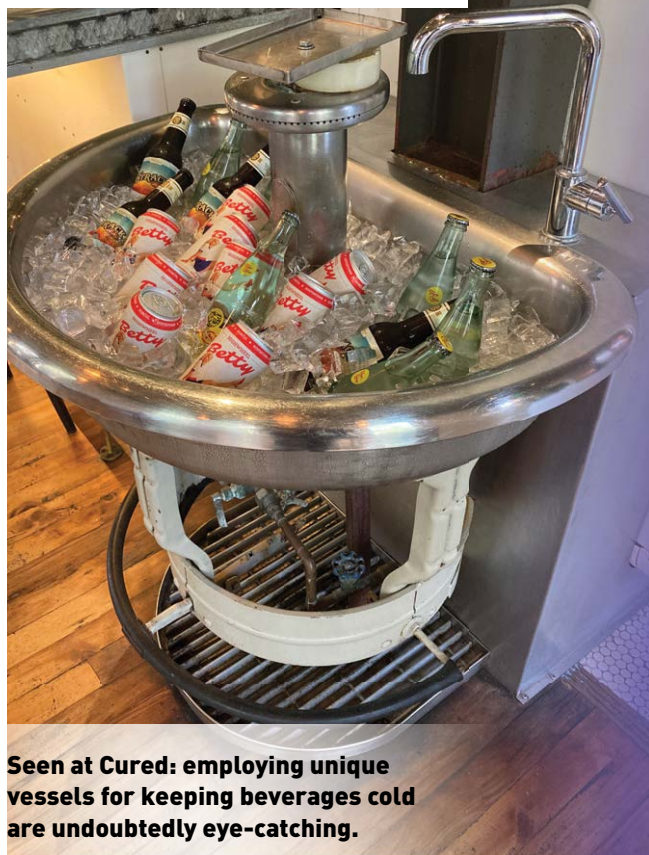


▼ Bite-sized Bacon & Brie Grilled Cheese with Cranberries | Chef Kate Lulloff

Photo courtesy Jones Dairy Farm



# AS SEEN IN SAN ANTONIO



Seen at Cured: employing unique vessels for keeping beverages cold are undoubtedly eye-catching.



Lovingly crafted cured foods, from pickles to charcuterie, command the menu at Cured. Chefs were treated to a Reserve Charcuterie Board featuring smoked duck ham, apple sage sausage, lamb & citrus terrine, 30 day cured Coppa, and pickled watermelon among other tastes. Trends in food preservation are at a high in 2021 and into 2022.

**D**uring the Leading Caterers of America Executive Summit, chefs from member companies throughout the U.S. took the afternoon to explore the varied cuisine and history of the Historic Pearl District, a walkable area replete with restaurants and boutique hotels, anchored by the Culinary Institute of America. With temperatures in the 70s, the short strolls between venues made for a pleasant day of exploration, conversation, and learning. — *Kathleen Stoebr*

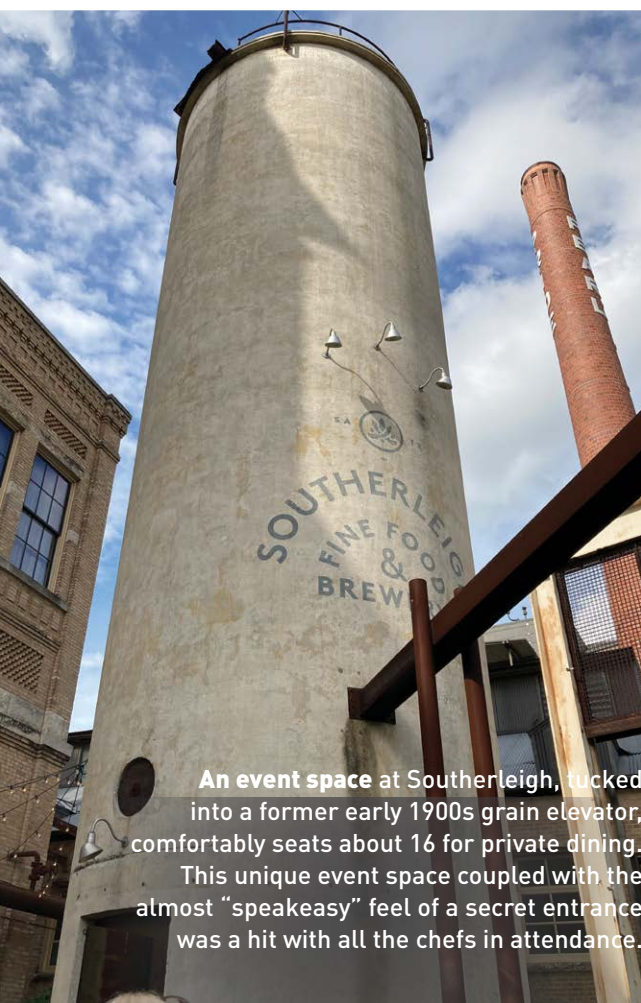


**Left: Fried red snapper** throats have a long culinary history, dating back to the 1930s, a leftover part that was typically used as a staff meal. But, they have a lot of flavorful meat and are now a popular item on Southern menus, including the menu at Southerleigh Fine Food & Brewery. Served with Crystal aioli and celery root remoulade.

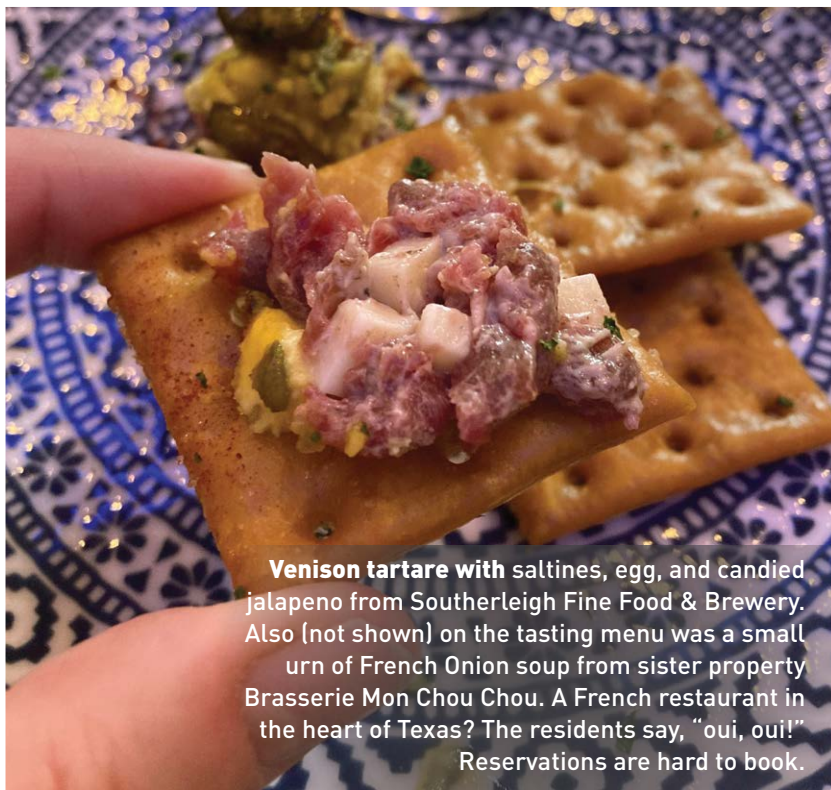


**A Veracruz** Hernandez' r pop of fresh in lime juice, Peruvian or M a delicious st event in lieu





An event space at Southerleigh, tucked into a former early 1900s grain elevator, comfortably seats about 16 for private dining. This unique event space coupled with the almost “speakeasy” feel of a secret entrance was a hit with all the chefs in attendance.



**Venison tartare** with saltines, egg, and candied jalapeno from Southerleigh Fine Food & Brewery. Also (not shown) on the tasting menu was a small urn of French Onion soup from sister property Brasserie Mon Chou Chou. A French restaurant in the heart of Texas? The residents say, “oui, oui!” Reservations are hard to book.



**Ceviche** from Chef Johnny at restaurant, La Gloria, was a vibrant mix of flavors. Served cold and “cooked” in citrus, ceviche is most often seen in Mexican forward cuisine but could be a starter for an elegant plated dinner or part of the more traditional salad.



A tour through the **Culinary Institute of America’s San Antonio** campus included a pop into the pastry and baking kitchen, with Chef Alain Dubernard, CMB, CHE leading students. Beyond baking and pastry arts, the San Antonio campus offers degree programs in culinary arts and specialties Latin cuisine.





by Liese Gardner



LIESE GARDNER

**Editor's note:** I will never forget my last in person meeting with Liese Gardner. It was March 12, 2020, Catersource + The Special Event's first collaboration as a co-located event was near the finish line. I was heading to the escalator up to the staff office and there she stood. I don't remember the exact exchange, but she shook her head and pretty much predicted the future. This was the end of events as we knew it for a very, very long time. Not something I wanted to hear, but Liese has always had true insight into the behavior of consumers. It's a pleasure to be able to print her thoughts on 2022 here today.

### IS THE METAVERSE ALREADY HERE?

With the announcement that Facebook changed its company name to "Meta," Mark Zuckerberg opened the floor to this post-COVID question. If living in a Meta world is to live in a digital world, we might be halfway there already. During lockdown, our daily in-person interactions went online with Zoom get-togethers and events, Facetime calls, shopping on Amazon, instant messaging across all platforms, texting, and more.

How does that affect you and me as business owners and entrepreneurs? We've realized that we are living in a new, online world and we have responded fast. We began to revamp our websites, realizing that new clients will now have to find us online. Our languishing

SEO is now front and center as we make sure that we are optimized for our ideal clients and we upped the ante on our email marketing, especially following several big outages of social media that reminded us that we are just renting space there. Bottom line. We are all paying attention to our message through our websites, email marketing, and social media. It's a content marketer's world now!

The most important thing that can happen in 2022 is that we make the final move and flip the switch on sales. It's not about "Pay attention to me! I have something to sell you!" Now, it's about "I have paid attention to you, and I am/have your solution."

In 2022 we will continue to form deeper client relationships. We will show up, not just as brands, but as the people behind those brands. We will learn to be empathetic. We will build relationships and alliances not just "clients." Whatever it might be now, the metaverse of business is looking bright! 



Don't just read... *Listen*

Juicy food ideas, dazzling event designs, and other boots-on-the-ground tips to help caterers and event planners like you be more successful in your business.



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**Four shifts in the wedding industry over the last year 42**

# SPECIAL EVENTS

WINTER 2021

STATE  
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INDUSTRY  
2022

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2022 BUSINESS  
& ECONOMIC  
TRENDS  
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# WINTER 2021 THIS ISSUE



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**On the cover:** The newly opened Red Berry Estate in San Antonio, TX welcomed guests with surprises and delight around every corner. Photo courtesy of The RKD Studio; Model: Artisan Oddities

# Winter 2021 THIS ISSUE

## CONTRIBUTORS



Marketing expert  
**Christie Osborne**  
defines which analytics  
you should be tracking  
this season.



Tech guru **Nora Sheils**  
busts open common  
event technology myths.



Events business  
strategist **Michelle  
Loretta** takes a look  
at three business and  
economic trends  
for 2022.



Animatic Media  
president **Scot Frankel**  
identifies the top tech  
trends for 2022.



Wedding extraordinaire  
**Brittney Drye** shares  
which wedding trends  
from the past year will  
continue to transform  
the way we do  
business.

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## EDITOR'S PAGE

# STATE OF THE INDUSTRY

I have spent the past 11 months of 2021 gathering anything and everything related to the recovery of our industry, so I could compile an incredible end of the year State of the Industry report for all of you. From the *New York Times* to the *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, to sessions presented at The Special Event to webinar notes and blog posts, I have a folder full of ideas and also way too many voice memos to wade through.

What it boils down to is that no one can better speak to the state of the industry than all of you. Not me. I'm perhaps what one might call, the "eagle flying over"—I look at everything and absorb a lot and can talk on many a catering and events topic because of it. But, I'm not in the day-to-day thick of it as you all are.

Consequently, for this issue—while I have provided an overview feature that touches on the many areas of concern for all of us, I'm leaving it to the experts to dive a bit deeper. Wherever you see a SOI2022 logo throughout this book, know that I am leaving that nugget of industry knowledge to someone who is living it on the job every day.

For example, turn to page 42 for founder and editor of *Love Inc.* magazine, Brittny Drye's, take on four shifts the wedding industry saw in 2021. Go to page 16 for Michelle Loretta of Be Sage Consulting and gear up for some business and economic trends we'll see in the coming year. Take a fun twirl through contributing writer, Sue Pelletier's incredible 25 Predictions for 2022, beginning on page 22. (This piece was such a gas to read last year that we asked her to take another stab at it for 2022 with a new set of experts. Who knows—it might become an annual feature!)

And then, of course, we have supplemented SOI2022 with some great, focused pieces that will help you continue to grow your business past the heights it saw in 2019.

2021 was certainly a roller coaster ride, wasn't it?

From all of us here at *Special Events* magazine and The Special Event Show, we wish you a beautiful holiday season and, even better: the best year ever in 2022.

Kathleen Stoehr  
Director of Community & Content Strategy

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## CONFERENCE NEWS

by Kathleen Stoehr

# Conference updates

*The Special Event heads to Anaheim in 2022*

### THE SPECIAL EVENT UPDATE

*All systems are go for a gathering in Anaheim, CA, May 2–5, 2022!*

Catersource + The Special Event staffs are excited to provide you with the means to network, learn, and get excited by an industry once again on the upswing. Here is an update on all the goings on.

**REGISTRATION:** Registration is open! Super Early Bird rates are in effect until February 1, 2022. Take advantage of the lowest prices available and enjoy exclusive access to webinars, virtual events, networking meetups, session sneak peeks and other exciting show-related niblets that only registered attendees can receive. If you want the inside scoop before the show so you arrive in the know, head over to [thespecialeventshow.com/](https://thespecialeventshow.com/) pricing to review pricing packages.

**CALL FOR SPEAKERS:** Our Call for Speakers is closed and the full educational schedule will launch on February 2. Right now, go to [schedule.thespecialeventshow.com](https://schedule.thespecialeventshow.com) to view evening event information and a few of our premier sessions. We are excited to be able to bring you the best and brightest in live education!

### SPECIAL EVENTS

## Gala Award

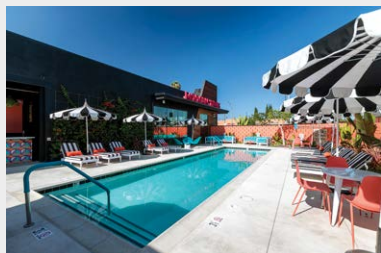
**AWARDS COMPETITION:** The Special Events Gala, Catersource ACE, and ICA CATIE awards nomination portal closes on January 15, 2022, so now is the time to get your special events in! Nominees will be announced via a special attendee invite only broadcast toward the end of March; awards will be presented at a TBD location in the Anaheim area.

Categories have been revamped to include virtual and hybrid events. Go to <https://ace-gala.awardsplatform.com> to enter no later than January 15, 2022. ●



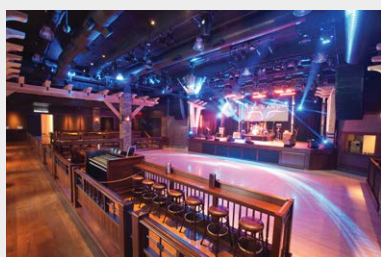
## VENUES, VENUES, VENUES!

It was a whirlwind of venue tours in Anaheim, CA and surrounding cities when the Catersource + The Special Event teams visited the last week of October. Where will the evening events and Thursday luncheon be held? With the help of Visit Anaheim, we toured several of the most intriguing. Here's a look at possibilities. When will we announce? Stay tuned!



### Modern Times Leisuretown

Modern Times is an employee-owned brewery/restaurant/café/swim-club “megaplex” in downtown Anaheim offering a variety of spaces for quiet conversation or lively discourse. The café, located in a historic home, is beautifully decorated and welcoming; the adjacent brewery and outdoor space are captivating. And yes, a pool! *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



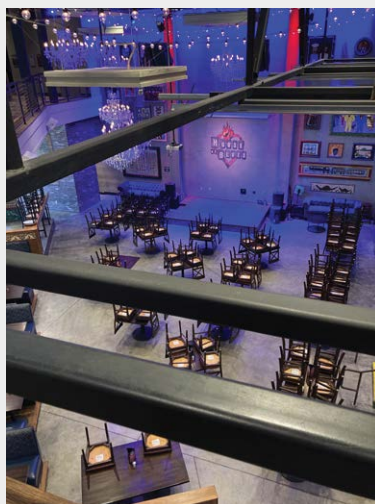
### The Ranch Restaurant, Saloon, and Events Center

The RANCH is an upscale fine dining and country music establishment located on the ground floor of Extron Electrics corporate headquarters in Anaheim. It also offers a luxurious private dining and events center on the sixth floor of the same building with epic views of Angel Stadium, Disneyland Resort® and more. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



### City National Grove of Anaheim

City National Grove of Anaheim is a premier, 1,700-seat facility located adjacent to Angel Stadium in the heart of Orange County, CA. Under Nederlander Concert management, this multipurpose, indoor venue—and its dedicated, talented chef who wooed us with sopas and Mexican sodas—dazzled us all. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



### House of Blues Anaheim

A dazzling property at the Garden Walk of Anaheim with small rooms for quiet conversation, large spaces for dancing and entertainment, and incredible décor that begged to be photographed. This is a dazzler of a venue offering a plethora of possibilities for a memorable event.



### Hilton Anaheim Grand Plaza Fountain

A beautifully landscaped gathering area that runs parallel between the Hilton and Marriott properties, featuring large fountains at either end. Next to the Anaheim Convention Center, we saw this space both bare and also tricked out for a large event on Tuesday evening under the stars, featuring food trucks. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*

# HANGAR 21

### Hangar 21

Eat, drink, and take flight in one of Southern California's most unique wedding and event spaces. Located in Fullerton, the open floorplan and versatile indoor/outdoor possibilities...and potential for private jet tours make this an appealing option for an evening event.



### Anaheim Marriott

Up on the roof of the Anaheim Marriott (a two-minute walk from the Anaheim Convention Center)

is a blank slate filled with possibility for a themed event, but also offering spectacular sky views. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



### Angel Stadium

Home of the Los Angeles Angels, this modern ballpark offers gorgeous views coupled with an unforgettable event space. A private party where the pros play? Batter up!



### Anaheim White House

Located in a historic home restored after a devastating 2018 fire, this gorgeous property also boasts Master Chef Maurice Brazier, who has been decorated with a Medal of National Merit for his worldwide culinary work. Private dining room, a ballroom and al fresco terrace make this an unique venue.



### Rumba Room Live!

Located on the Garden Walk, this Latin-themed nightclub offers a Vegas experience in the heart of Orange County. State of the art audio, video, and lighting systems and elegant color palette with an “up close and personal” feel to its performance stage, bringing guests close to the entertainers. Plus, the head bartender knows his way around building beautiful craft cocktails (we know, we were lucky to taste through a few)!



### Muckenthaler Cultural Center

On the National Registry of Historic Houses, The Muckenthaler Mansion and its 8.5 acres is now a public entity affectionately called The Muck by its patrons. With an outdoor amphitheatre, as well as an indoor cabaret space, art gallery and more, it's a premier wedding venue for the region. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



### Golden Road Brewery

With a full-service restaurant and bright, beautiful beer garden, Golden Road impressed us with its sustainability efforts, including the modular solar panels producing 75 to 80 percent of the total electricity for its Anaheim facility, which is located near Angel Stadium.

### The GRAND THEATRE

#### The Grand Theatre

Two ballrooms plus a 1000+ seat capacity theater could allow for guest migration from one theme to the next.



### Anaheim Packing House

Built in 1919, the Anaheim Packing District lives on to pay homage to its citrus-packing roots with a lively complex full of local vendors, a variety of food options, and bars, plus an expansive outdoor area. *Photo courtesy Visit Anaheim*



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# ACE *Gala*

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## A W A R D S

**Deadline: December 31, 2021**

CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. BEST WORK IN CATERING & SPECIAL EVENTS. THE VERY BEST

**Find all the details at**  
**[ace-gala.awardsplatform.com](http://ace-gala.awardsplatform.com)**

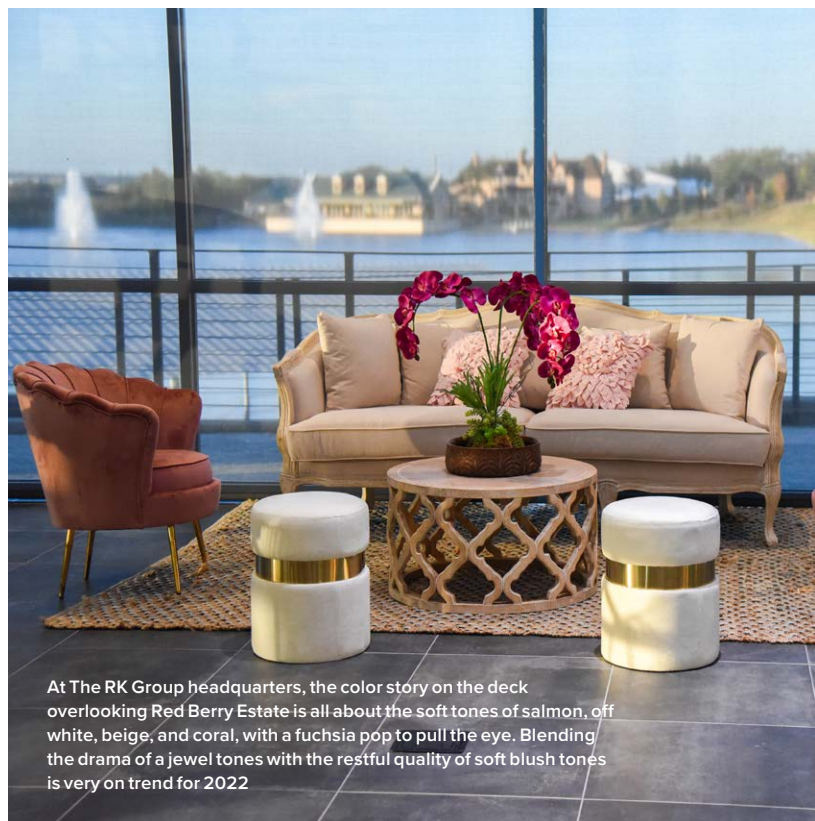
## SPECIAL EVENTS



# Simply Divine!

**After spending two** evenings with The RK Group, first at their headquarters and next at their beautiful new venue, The Red Berry Estate, it's clear they have a plethora of divine décor at their disposal. Take a look at what this catering and events company does to entice their clients, provide a welcoming atmosphere for its employees, and showcase trend-forward decor. —Kathleen Stoehr ●

*All photos courtesy of The RKD Studio unless otherwise specified.*



At The RK Group headquarters, the color story on the deck overlooking Red Berry Estate is all about the soft tones of salmon, off white, beige, and coral, with a fuchsia pop to pull the eye. Blending the drama of a jewel tones with the restful quality of soft blush tones is very on trend for 2022



Several tablescapes with varying trends and tones greet guests as they arrive at the headquarters. This looks quite perfect for a bridal shower, right? Photo courtesy Kathleen Stoehr



Curvy feminine silhouettes coupled with tufted details and a trend-forward warm, neutral tone create an inviting, yet restful experience as guests enter the foyer area of Red Berry Estate.





Fabric swatches hang nearby for potential clients to peruse.



Popular glassware and plates line another area of the RK Group headquarters entryway, for quick selection.

Rich metallics with the jewel tone pop of red roses at the center of the tables offered this evening-attire-requested event at the Red Berry Estate the opulence it required for top executive guests.





# CONFETTI

## A Berry Good Event

It was an event to end all events when The RK Group hosted the Leading Caterers of America at their new venue, The Red Berry Estate. From the moment executives stepped off their chartered bus, “surprise and delight” details awaited, delicious bites were plentiful, and the entertainment was nonstop. **Here’s a look.**

BY Kathleen Stoehr

All photos courtesy of The RKD Studio



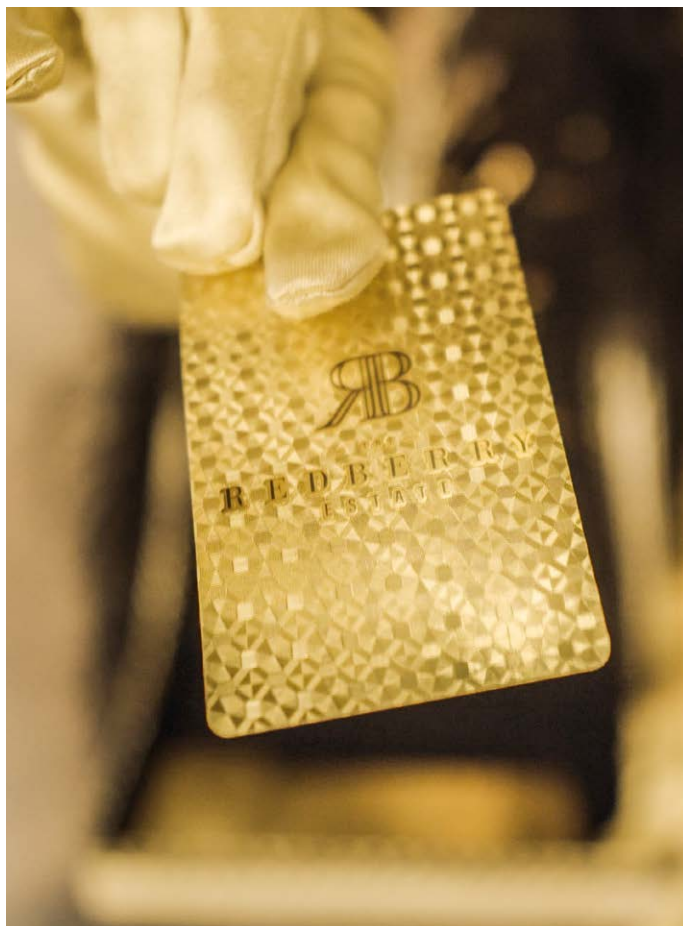
Delicious French 75s were reworked into “RK 75s” to celebrate the company’s 75th anniversary, made with locally distilled grapefruit gin from Seeksucker Southern Style Gin. A lovely flute of champagne was also an option.





Two red carpet divas flanked the runway entrance to the mansion. These rose red dresses and backdrop are a nod to The RK Group's position as official caterer at The Kentucky Derby Museum.





TOP: An ice sculpture, built by onsite ice carver, Buddy "Burr" Rasmussen, tempted guests with a plethora of seafood options, from oysters on the half shell, crab legs, and Gulf shrimp. LEFT: To enter the speakeasy/casino, a golden ticket was a necessary accessory. RIGHT: Blackjack, roulette and other games of chance closed the evening festivities.





Caviar nestled atop poached marble potatoes, chives, and crème fraîche were the perfect pop-able pre-dinner appetizer.



Inside, “Gatsby”-reminiscent cigar box girls slyly distributed special gold-toned playing card passes to a speakeasy afterparty, to build anticipation.



An elegant plated dinner with synchronized service was one of the highlights of the event.

TOP RIGHT: The menu consisted of three appetizers: caviar, flowers, seafood shrimp cocktail, and a full-on platter of duck and chicken. To the left, the classic gold-trimmed playing card passes were distributed.



# Three Business & Economic Trends to Prepare for in 2022 & Beyond



By Michelle Loretta

## What will the next decade be like?

No one has a crystal ball. However, I have been watching economic shifts over the last few years. And I am starting to see some patterns take shape. These are the areas that I want my fellow event professionals to keep in mind as they begin to prepare for the next few years of business.

## COMMUNICATION IS BEING DISRUPTED

The way that we communicate with clients is being disrupted this very minute. Since 2000, we have seen the shift away from the phone as the primary means of client communication to email. By 2030, email will no longer be the preferred method of correspondence. Make way for messaging!

Right now, we cringe when we get client demands via Instagram DM. We shudder when we wake up to a barrage of client texts at three in the morning. But this is Gen Z's preferred method of contact. Email is too formal and too personal for people ages 10 to 24. Email also requires too many steps for these young adults and kids with a quick finger on the phone trigger. Email is to Gen Z what the phone is for many of us Gen Y or Gen X. (Don't you dare call me without an appointment! I will not pick up.)

We will not always be at the mercy of these social media messaging inboxes that have little tracking and business functionality. This technology

will continue to evolve. It is likely we will also see a much more streamlined messaging system that is easier to employ for work purposes. Until then, try to find a balance with this ever-dominant method of communication and your own business systems. Messaging is not going away.

## GET YOUR STAFF PROPERLY CLASSIFIED

It is not unusual for me to see event workers misclassified as contractors. This puts you at risk with the IRS leaving you open to potential penalties and back tax due. If you have any control over how your team does work for you, they should be classified as employees. Contractors need to be experts in their field. They call the shots on their contracts, their invoicing, and their payment terms. Contractors are not trained by your company to fulfill their jobs. Anything less than this can be frowned upon by the IRS.

If you live in California or New York, you have likely seen that the IRS definition is made even more strict by state labor laws. These two states often dictate laws that begin to slowly form in other states across the country. Typically, we see Washington follow next. Little by little, more states begin to adopt more worker protections. Right now, [the IRS defines the standard nationally](#). Get right with the IRS, and you'll be prepared for when your state tightens its own labor laws.

It's likely we will see tax reform on these limited classes to something specifically for 'gig workers'—a hybrid

"If you can inch your way toward three to six months of cash outflow, you will be in a much more secure position for the next recession. **Keep in mind, a normal recession is not as crippling as a complete shutdown, such as in 2020. Yet, it can cripple you if unprepared.**"





of the contractor and employee. But the IRS moves slowly, and it could be another decade or two before we see any major amendments to the tax code.

### BOOM NOW, BUST LATER

Anyone who has been in business for a decade or more can tell you all about the economic cycles they have experienced—even before the pandemic shock of last year. Events are currently booming, and they will continue to do so through at least 2023—potentially through 2025. After that, it is best to prepare for some sort of bust. When will that happen? How will it happen? What will the trigger be? All this is impossible to predict. Economic boom-bust cycles tend to happen about every 10+/- years. We are due.

Now is the time to squirrel away cash for that eventual bust. How much should a business save? You want to have a minimum of one month of

cash outflow covered (expenses, equity draws, and debt repayment). If you can inch your way toward three to six months of cash outflow, you will be in a much more secure position for the next recession. Keep in mind, a normal recession is not as crippling as a complete shutdown, such as in 2020. Yet, it can cripple you if unprepared.

Something else to keep in mind: once you feel secure in your business savings, it's OK to stop amassing cash. I see some business owners with beefy reserves that are not serving a purpose. While this is incredibly admirable, it may be completely unnecessary. That cash can often serve a greater good for that owner whether it be used in a retirement account or invested in personal property, stocks, or mutual funds. The goal is to feel secure in that business cash reserve, but not at the expense of smarter personal investments for the owner outside of the business.

2022, we are ready for you! It feels good to be looking forward. I am excited to see what the rest of the decade brings to our wonderful industry. ●

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**Michelle Loretta** is a strategist for the events industry and creator of [Be Sage Consulting](#), formerly Sage Wedding Pros. With a degree in accounting and a career rooted in her time at Deloitte, she dissects numbers to help level-up businesses' earnings and has educated, coached, and consulted event pros since 2009. In 2021, Michelle launched the [Sage Coaches program](#) to match industry experts with event professionals to supply coaching in niche topics. Michelle has spoken at several industry conferences, including WeddingWire World, NACE Experience, and The Special Event.

# Connecting Virtual *&* Physical Worlds

## STATE OF THE INDUSTRY 2022



For a hybrid social event, such as this wedding produced by Jaclyn Watson Events, video monitors “Zoomed” in guests unable to attend, while the in-person ceremony and celebration continued as planned. *Photo courtesy Jaclyn Watson Events*



**Safety and security.  
Clear communication.  
Convenience and**

**control.** These three “big pieces of consumer emotion,” as noted by futurist Michael Rogers, are the major challenges event professionals will need to address as clients reach out for assistance in celebrating impactful moments of their lives. Addressing these inherent needs, sprung from the way business relationships changed during the 16-plus months of COVID lockdown, is about, “what ... should remain in the virtual world; what should come back to the physical world—and how do we connect between them,” says Rogers.



**Most companies still have the desire to have a virtual component to meetings and events.”**

— Lori Burden, Director of Sales and Marketing at the Sylvan hotel



**VOK DAMS is going back to live...carefully.”**

— Colja Dams, CEO, VOK DAMS



**Nothing compares to the sensory experience of an in-person event.”**

— Ty Kuppig, TYGER Event Design & Production

By Kathleen Stoehr

Clients want to know that their events are safe, and they want absolutely no BS regarding the communication that addresses their needs. Additionally, having control over how guests experience an event, be it from home, office, or in-person, is a predominant trending ask.

### THE STATS

In Germany, Colja Dams, CEO, VOK DAMS notes the company is going back to live...carefully. In a study the company conducted in Q3, “twenty-six percent of all inquiries received by **VOK DAMS** in Germany concern face-to-face events, 35 percent to hybrid events with a mix of digital and face-to-face components, and 39 percent to purely digital gatherings,” says Dams. “The economy in Germany is still initially focusing on the particularly flexible digital and hybrid formats, as companies need a longer lead time for their events and certainty in their implementation.”

But Dams sees other parts of the world responding to live events with greater frequency, citing a 30 percent increase in live event asks in China since the beginning of 2021, and “in the USA, too, inquiries for live events continue to rise, which VOK DAMS sees as a result of the country’s successful COVID-19 vaccination program.”

### CONNECTING VIRTUAL & PHYSICAL

At the start of 2021, Ty Kuppig, Founder & Creative Director for TYGER Event Design & Production noted for *Special Events* magazine, “I wholeheartedly believe that nothing compares to the sensory experience of an in-person event, so virtual will never be a replacement. But when we do return to in-person events, I see the importance of maintaining a virtual component as a valuable supplement to further reach and amplify messaging—allowing events to become more engaging than ever before.” A spot on prediction.

Much of what we do in our industry relies on all senses being engaged, from taste buds to scent, to tactile. It’s a fine line we straddle, but most signs point to offering hybrid for optimal “line straddling.” For those unable to travel to an event, be it across town or across the world, the “**Hybrid Event Revolution**,” as Julius Solaris of EventMB calls it, is here to stay.

“Hybrid event design is about creating something that is greater than the sum of its parts,” says Solaris. “It’s about integrating the two experiences so that they are robust in their own right but connected such that one improves the other.”

The corporate event and meetings world is also in agreement.

“Most companies still have the desire to have a virtual

component to meetings and events,” says Lori Burden, Director of Sales and Marketing at The Sylvan hotel in Atlanta, about corporate events. “The Sylvan will be offering hybrid options in addition to the total in-person meeting offerings. Companies can host meetings and events without the need to be fully out of pocket on Zoom. Rather, you can gather and host in-person sessions and bring back the necessity of face-to-face employee connections while also having virtual components.”

How do you begin gathering the components to decide the best options for your clients’ events? At Informa PLC, headquartered in London and offering exhibition events worldwide (disclosure: *Special Events* magazine and The Special Event are owned by Informa PLC), its Connect division developed several virtual/physical format possibilities that have proved useful in the development of its own events. To be considered:

- What content and experiences will be face-to-face only; face-to-face but also streamed; or streamed only?
- What parts of the program or event can be delivered virtually before the event itself and supplemented with real time in-person engagement?
- What elements will be modified or not happen, dependent on COVID?
- What cost challenges and potential solutions might there be?

Determine what’s right for your client, and then make your best recommendation based on budget and circumstance.

“When mapping out event design, don’t take an all-or-nothing approach—especially if it’s your first hybrid,” says Cvent’s Senior Vice president and Chief Marketing Officer Patrick Smith via [MeetingsNet.com](https://www.meetingsnet.com). “For example, rather than trying to livestream every session, take a step back to assess your event goals, then categorize sessions into three blocks: Those that absolutely must be live; Those that could be ‘simu-live’ (pre-recorded video with live chat and presenter Q&A); and those that could be pre-recorded for on-demand viewing later.

Need further help to assess? [Click here](#) to uncover what type of hybrid event is the best match for you or your client.

### STAFFING UP

Another area of great concern in 2021 and beyond is staffing of events. “Everybody in the world is hiring at the same time!” touted the New York Times in April 2021. Pleas from companies broadcasting upcoming staffing needs run rampant on multiple social media platforms. Offers to pay travel, lodging, airfare to an event, and better than minimum wages have become more frequent. In bridging the gap between virtual and physical worlds, the onslaught of online staffing apps and programs have become a game changer. App features that



# The Foreseeable Future

collect vaccination information on potential staff, programs to reward workers with bonuses and perks—this connectivity helps the cause immensely. Some hiring managers have signed individuals directly from an online application and/or after a Zoom interview. The days of bringing candidates into the office are twilighting.

But there's hope: Speaking at a November 2021 C-level business conference, Cathy Hardin, Chief Revenue Officer for [Instawork](#) (an online and app-based staffing program), noted, "People want to work. I've seen a lot about the Great Resignation, but what we are optimistic about is that it's not necessarily everyone resigning, it's what a lot of people are calling the Great Reallocation. People are changing the way they want to work, and we sit at the intersection of listening to workers and understanding how they want to work in the future. The number one thing they are asking for is flexibility."

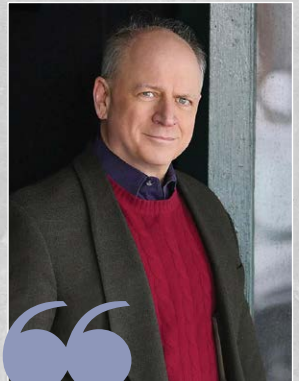
## PUT ON YOUR HEADSETS?

Finally, look to online programs like AllSeated and other event planning platforms that provide a virtual reality component, allowing the ability to "walk-through" spaces, making the planning of destination weddings or other events happen, despite the lack of an on-site presence. Just another example of the connection our physical and virtual worlds hold for us all, as we move from 2021 into 2022. ●

"There has been a massive buildup of asset-based household wealth in the U.S.," says Carl Sacks, Executive Director of the Leading Caterers of America. "This is in part because of the remarkable (and sometimes perplexing) runup in the stock market [over the summer], and because of spending deferred during the pandemic. Most U.S. workers, particularly in white collar jobs, have remained employed during the pandemic. They have been banking a lot of their pay due to deferred spending on vacations, restaurant meals, sports and entertainment, and other typical activities."

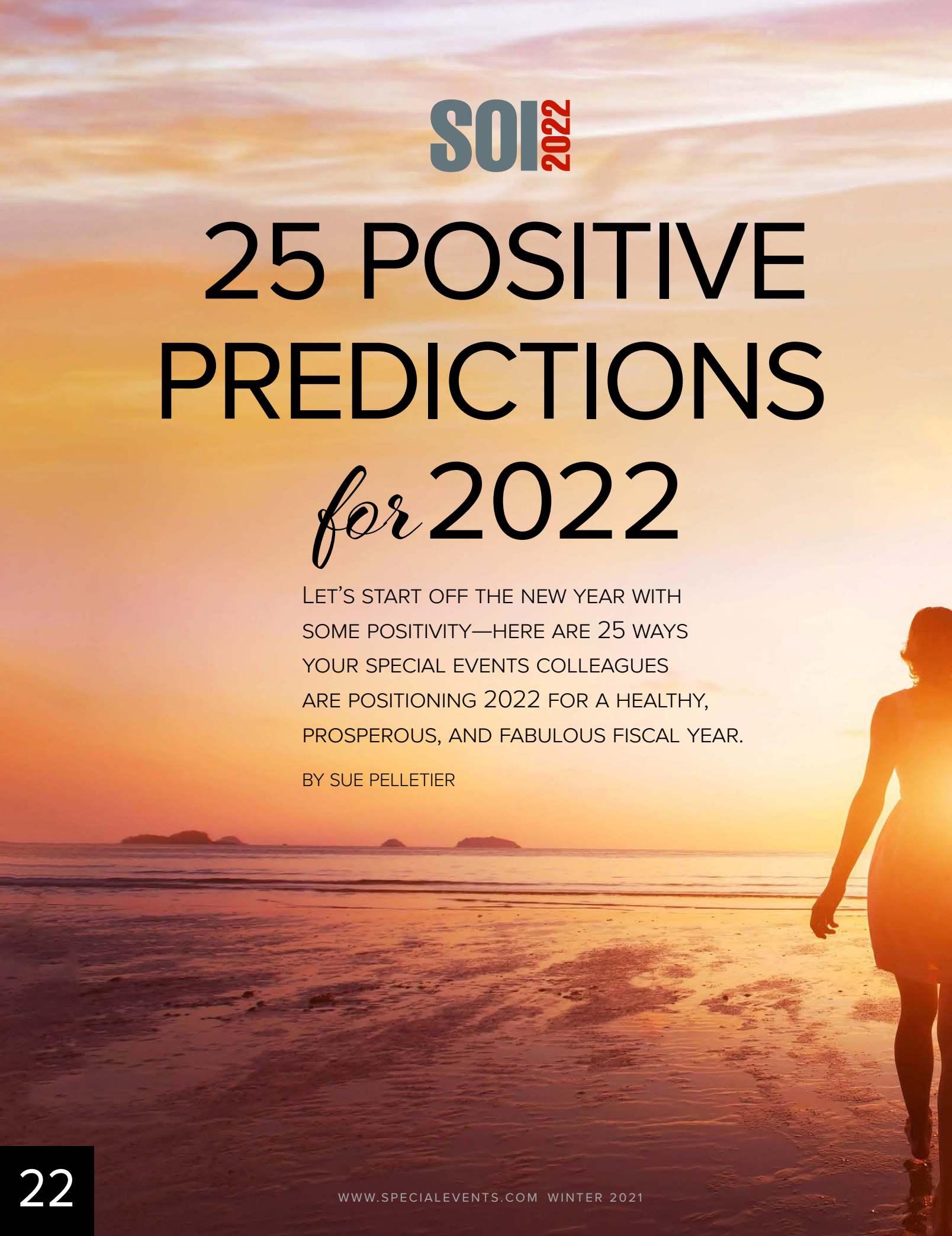
How does this impact the event industry? Here are his predictions:

- **Life cycle events**, particularly weddings, quinceañeras, and mitzvahs, are already recovering. Some of these have been rescheduled from the pandemic months, but much of this business is just part of the typical flow of life cycle events.
- **Social entertaining** is already generating incoming bookings and will start to recover substantially.
- **Corporate marketing driven events**, including VIP sponsorship events associated with sports and entertainment, started back up in fall 2021. Many sports and entertainment events were either held without spectators or cancelled altogether in 2020. When these events return, catered VIP hospitality events will as well.
- **Small to medium local and regional meetings** are starting to show up on the calendar for later this year. These include SMERF (social, military, educational, religious, and fraternal) events, as well as corporate events.
- **Fundraisers and galas** are already happening, sometimes as hybrid events, and sometimes as face-to-face events. It will probably be 2022 before we start to see fully reloaded gala schedules.
- **Convention and incentive travel-related events** will probably take some time to return to previous levels, but we are confident they will return eventually.



“There has been a massive buildup of asset-based household wealth in the U.S.”

— Carl Sacks, Executive Director of the Leading Caterers of America



SOI 2022

# 25 POSITIVE PREDICTIONS *for* 2022

LET'S START OFF THE NEW YEAR WITH  
SOME POSITIVITY—HERE ARE 25 WAYS  
YOUR SPECIAL EVENTS COLLEAGUES  
ARE POSITIONING 2022 FOR A HEALTHY,  
PROSPEROUS, AND FABULOUS FISCAL YEAR.

BY SUE PELLETIER





**D****ESPITE THE HIGH HOPES** we all had for 2021, it turned out to be a bit more of a roller-coaster ride than expected. Despite a mostly successful vaccine rollout in the U.S. that has made a big dent in the health and economic havoc caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, it still was a year of fits and starts thanks to the Delta variant. Fortunately, event professionals are quick to learn from experience, are resourceful, and they are always looking for new ways to exceed client expectations.

We asked 25 top industry thought leaders to share their perspectives on what they have learned over the nearly two years of COVID craziness, and what they are looking forward to as we round the corner into a shiny new year. Here are just a few of the ideas, trends, and positive perspectives they have for the future.

Do you have a story to tell? Let us know! Contact Special Events Editor in Chief Kathleen Stoehr at [kathleen.stoehr@informa.com](mailto:kathleen.stoehr@informa.com) to share your own lessons learned and thoughts on how to not just survive, but also flourish in the coming year.

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# 1



## **PEGGY KELLEY**, Wedding & Event Stylist, Timeless Celebrations

On March 12, 2020, as I was sitting in the Mandalay Bay ballroom listening to Michael Cerbelli's *The Hot List*™, I could hear laptops dinging with cancellations. First our events world stopped, and then it changed. While stopped, I had the opportunity to look at my business toolbox to see what I could do "in the meantime." This was our time to "step back to step forward"—who knew we would all be

chatting on a new platform called Clubhouse and working in each other's companies to make sure we were ALL still in business? To everyone: Know that your creativity plus your commitment to connection and community inspired the world.

Every generation brings a core skill that builds on the one prior. I started my business before the internet, cell phones, and social

media; my business was and still is built on referrals and relationships. Today's new event generation is more digitally focused, leading the way with CRMs, chat bots, and virtual. My goal as we step into 2022 is to create collaborative communities connecting both generations. Let's build a bridge and support each other!



## **JACKIE WATSON**, Jaclyn Watson Events

2 Fasten your seatbelts, wedding peeps—the wedding boom is here to stay for at least the next two to three years. Here at JWE we are predicting that couples will book earlier than ever before due to the backlog of weddings that were unable to happen during the pandemic. As a wedding vendor you will get booked and you will be able to demand higher prices. Couples will increase budgets and will gladly pay more for their vendors. Weddings, including those with large budgets, are on the rise and couples are eager to book and eager to plan. Weddings with large guest counts will slowly start to trickle back in, but that traditional sweet spot of 100-150 guests is here to stay. Couples more than ever will want to create exceptional experiences for their guests. After nearly two years of no parties, no dancing, and little interaction couples are excited to get back to some form of normalcy.

With weddings on the rise, trends for 2022 and beyond are starting to take shape as well. Say hello to earthy and mellow tones along with specific movie themes that are emerging like, *Bridgerton*! Romantic and soft and subtle blues will soon be upon us.



**Janice P. Blackmon,**  
Owner/Lead Planner,  
Janice Blackmon Events

**3** While we would all like to put COVID completely behind us, I believe we did learn some valuable lessons that can carry us through to events in 2022 and beyond.

I've always encouraged my clients to weave their own personalities into their event, making it truly unique to the couple. Now with many events having smaller guest counts, it is even more important to bring those personal touches to the event, whether through décor, the menu, entertainment or even favors that may have been ignored previously. With smaller celebrations, there is more opportunity to spend quality time with the guests and every touch point should leave the guest knowing they were part of a truly special event. I also encourage my clients to consider offering sanitation stations so that we can all continue to participate in good hygiene that should be a part of everyone's daily routine. There are ways to offer these with personalization and the presentation of the products, which further elevates the event and allows guests to feel safe. When large events do return in full force, my goal is to make sure my clients don't overlook those unique, personal touches.

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**Bobbi Brinkman,** Photographer, Speaker, Educator, & Coach

2022 will show us that there is room for growth as an industry, especially when we embrace change and accept a challenge of how the industry can change in a matter of a few days. We now have the courage and ability to think even more outside the box. We'll lead with our passion for weddings and events and with our purpose to serve clients and each other by creating designs and tackling logistics unseen before.

We'll learn to utilize all the tech and apps available to deliver even more extraordinary, successful, and even safer events because that is who we are as event professionals. Sure, we are all a little more bruised than in seasons past, but grateful that we are still standing. We have earned the opportunity to celebrate our industry, local communities, and ourselves as CEOs, team members, and anyone who went above and beyond with us.

Bring on the 2022 wedding boom. We are ready!





**Cindy Brewer**, Principal,  
LEO Events

**5** The shift from one-way communication with corporate customers via procurement to a more relational approach with supplier diversity managers is one of the most exciting trends we are currently seeing. Corporations are beginning to reach out to certified women or diverse-owned businesses, like LEO Events, for mentorship in

developing capabilities statements, virtual pitches, and registration tutorials for preferred vendor systems. This change is refreshing and progressive, and we applaud companies like Waste Management, AT&T, ServiceNow, Ricoh, and many others for hosting open-door sessions in which supplier diversity managers are accessible, human, and receptive to relationship-building. We can't wait to see more Fortune 500 companies follow their lead in 2022.



**Colja Dams**, CEO, VOK DAMS  
worldwide

Live events are back—the “new live,” that is. After the long months of COVID-19 restrictions, people are

keen to meet face-to-face again. The return of real live events, trade fairs, and congresses is something we all have been eagerly awaiting.

The fact that our clients are also increasingly requesting large events

**6**



again reflects exactly this deep need for strong community experiences. The good news: Live events are back. But they sure have a different character than before the pandemic. This is what we call the “new live.”

Digitalization, sustainability, and agility will play a major role in the new live. Although the core of live events will remain the same—creating unforgettable brand experiences—the pandemic has had an impact on the process. Many things have changed. Details will have to be readjusted including the “Zoom” mindset, reliable COVID-safe routines, agile work environments, and persuasive staff acquisition.



**Rob Barber**, Vice President, Modular Systems + R&D

**7** At the end of the day, we are a group of creatives and creatives need to create, so when our industry and the world paused...we ran!

We ran toward opportunity. And, while we never asked for this, the downturn afforded us the opportunity to create, reinvent, and reengage our team into something that became two new companies with entirely new products. I am speaking on behalf of the entire ATOMIC family and our two new companies when I say: We were energized, smiling, and creating in a time when there was absolutely no reason to

be happy, joking and creating. We all had so many difficult decisions and emotions, both personally and professionally, to process. These were some of the toughest decisions we ever had to make, yet it was awesome and somewhat therapeutic to focus on creating and designing.

I'm beyond proud of our entire ATOMIC family, their commitment, their energy, and their accomplishments during a time when the entire live event industry was on lockdown. Our entire company has restructured, retooled, reinvented, and refocused on the future. We're stronger and more poised than ever.

If the past four months have been any indication of what is to come in 2022, then the fog has lifted and the future is bright! Event professionals are diligent, resourceful, and resilient.



**Kim Forrest**, Senior Editor, WeddingWire

I recently attended my first wedding since the COVID pause. It was a really special experience for several reasons, and it felt very reflective of the trends we're anticipating for 2022. Perhaps most significantly, I was struck by how genuinely excited everyone was to

be there. Also, I think the COVID pause has allowed couples to take new liberties when it comes to certain wedding traditions—they have waited so long for this moment, they are going to do it their way. Guests are so happy to celebrate that no one seems to care if the



# 8

**Talia Felicia**, MBA, Owner & Creative Director, Talia Felicia Events + Design; Adjunct Professor, Tourism, Hospitality and Event Management, University of Florida

Events and gatherings have been a part of our lives since the dawn of history. Humanity has always overcome adversity, and these last two years are no different. What I think is most beautiful about this extremely challenging and tumultuous time has been our industry's ability and willingness to truly lean on one another.

As we come back over the next year, this togetherness and strong sense of community will be paramount in not only our good success, but also in providing clients and their guests with the most engaging and memorable experiences they've ever had. Many have said it, and I think now it resonates differently that we are

**STRONGER TOGETHER.** When things start to feel a little more normal, and we're pushing through the event space with excitement, force and gusto, let's not forget all we have learned about supporting and valuing one another. Together we will make 2022 an EPIC year in events!"



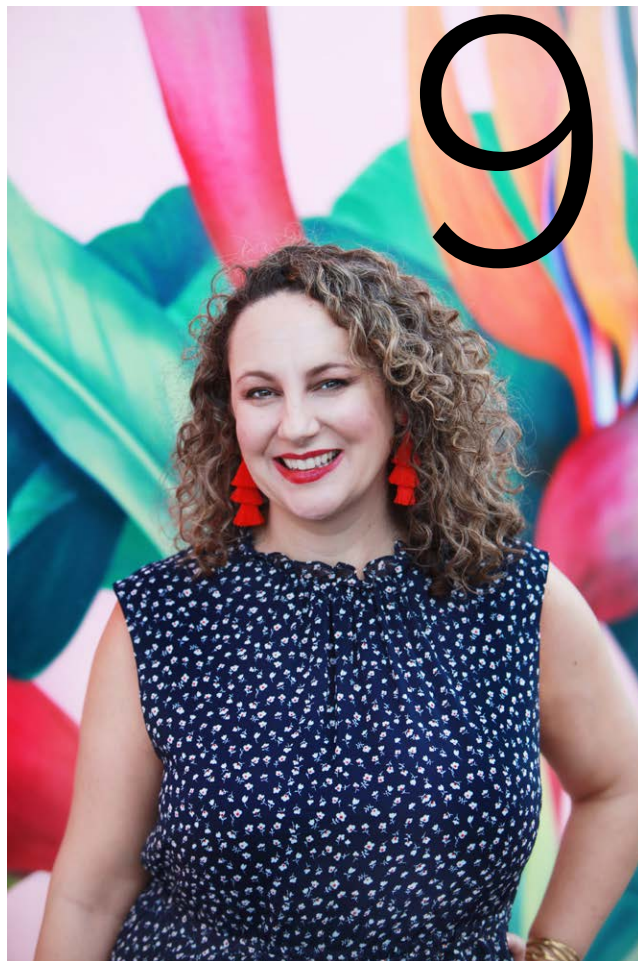
# 10

couple skips the traditional first dance, or there is no wedding party. And couples can focus more on the guest experience to ensure everyone feels taken care of and has a great time. It is really a win-win.

# 9

**Michelle Loretta**, Owner, Be Sage Consulting

Our industry is the belle of the ball right now! While other industries are cutting back on services offered a la "Skimpflation," events and hospitality businesses are standing out. We have spent the last two years saving events and going above-and-beyond for clients. Consumers know and see the hard work we have done. This will continue to benefit our industry as people are willing to pay top dollar to service providers that they know will deliver. I am seeing this in bigger client event budgets, and less price pushback than in years before.



# 11

**Pawntra Shadab,**  
CTA, CIS, CTP,  
Vice President of  
Events & Marketing,  
Elite Productions  
International



Having recently returned from a trade show and conference, I am truly inspired by my peers in the hospitality, meeting, and event industries. Despite a global pandemic and the rapid changes in our industry, we have all worked hard to persevere while creating new and innovative solutions to an ever-changing business. 2022 will continue

to be a year of growth, exploration, and opportunity as we look for new ways to connect and engage our audiences in a safe way. This industry is here to stay.



**Kathy A. Newby,** CERP, Vice President,  
Major Accounts, Abbey Party Rents

# 12

I am very optimistic that 2022 will return to pre-COVID levels, unless of course a new variant emerges. Here's what we're seeing:

- Curated guest lists: Because of the pandemic, couples have felt more freedom about reducing the number of attendees. Many 2022 couples are planning more intimate weddings with 50 or fewer guests; this allows them to stretch their budgets in other ways.
- Weekday events: Many venues and hotels are booked for weekend dates during 2022. Couples postponed their wedding dates, and, of course, folks continued to get engaged, which is resulting in high competition for weekend weddings.
- Hybrid events: These are likely to continue into 2022. Adding a virtual element to a traditional live event structure, hybrid events allow small groups to take part in face-to-face sessions, which are then shared with a larger audience using digital platforms.





# 13

**Nora Sheils**, Co-Founder, Rock Paper Coin, Founder Bridal Bliss

I am filled with positivity when I think about what the future of the wedding industry holds in 2022. It's only going up, right? After dealing with the loss and disappointments of 2020, then the chaos of the wedding boom in 2021, 2022 looks to be a year of positivity. Budgets are bigger than ever, while couples are focused on what is most important—their marriage and their nearest and dearest. Our weddings in 2022 are much more thoughtful, while at the same time full of luxe details.

A big lesson learned for wedding and event pros who have been attempting to avoid incorporating technology into their company is that they cannot exist without it. Couples and clients planning events have no patience for anything but a streamlined and easy experience. So many have taken the plunge and as a result, will have a better work/life balance in 2022. When you lessen administrative tasks with automation and increase the ability for clients to interact virtually, it means more time for your craft or family.

**Aleya Harris**, CPCE, Owner, Flourish Marketing

2021 has been an intense year for the industry, with many event professionals shining a light on the foundation of their businesses to establish a sustainable brand that stands the test of time. Take a moment to evaluate your current marketing efforts and determine if they still align with your big-picture business goals.

Going into the new year, it will be vital to find the balance between the booms and busts. Both are inevitable, so avoid spiraling during slow periods and overcompensating during busy periods. Instead, learn to trust yourself, your marketing, your intuition, and your ability to succeed. A slow month is not a failure, but rather an opportunity to reflect and recharge. A busy month is not a time to do it all, but rather a chance to prioritize what's most important and protect your energy.



# 14

As we navigate the ups and downs 2022 has in store for us, authenticity will help you find stability and strength. Instead of jumping on the latest fads and novelties, stay true to yourself and don't lose sight of the values that have driven you so far. Trust is built through transparency, both in terms of who you are and what you offer to the world. Start the new year by celebrating all that makes you and your business unique, then carry that with you throughout 2022 and beyond.

# 15

**Thomas Whelan**, Director of Banquets, Levy Convention Centers

In 2020–2021, my events community became my extended family. Now, looking forward to 2022, I am excited to celebrate and support them at every turn. I am so lucky to be surrounded by the most incredible people. Through the pandemic, it was the friends I had made at conferences who answered the late-night phone calls and talked me through anxiety, stress, and fear. Now, we have the same late-night calls and talk about how happy we are to be back doing what we love. I am so excited to watch all my



friends plan the best events, cater the most amazing meals, and give me the biggest hugs when I see them walking a trade show floor in the future. It takes a special person to work in events—a little crazy, a bit eccentric, but with the biggest hearts. My crew, my friends, my colleagues—they deserve the world and I can't wait to see them all get it.

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**Meredith Commender**, CSEP, Owner/Lead Event Coordinator, Significant Events of Texas

In 2022, I predict we will have clients, especially corporate clients, looking for new and creative solutions for hybrid events and virtual events. While we will be doing in-person events for those clients as well, the developments we have made with virtual events will continue to be part of the event industry, educating us on all the different methods in which an event can be experienced. These experiences will continue to benefit us now and in the future as well-rounded event professionals who can adjust to any challenge.







**Jen Avey**, VP of Marketing, Destination Weddings Travel Group

17

We're thrilled to see the current wedding boom start to positively impact the destination wedding industry. Resort venues throughout Mexico and the Caribbean are pulling out all the stops to ensure couples and their guests feel welcome and safe while in an international destination—this spans everything from instilling extra health and safety protocols onsite to

mandating all employees be vaccinated to offering free onsite COVID-19 testing to fulfill any and all CDC requirements for returning to the United States.

We're looking forward to more and more destination wedding celebrations getting back on track in 2022—whether that's couples who originally postponed their initial plans who now get to ultimately see their vision come to life, or those who are recently engaged who can fulfill their dream of bringing their friends and family together in an exotic locale to celebrate together.

18

**Chrissy Thompson**, DES, CEO, Dynamo Events

As we move into 2022 and reflect on both 2021 and 2020, I am most grateful for the spirit of collaboration in our industry that came out of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic forced us all to get creative fast and to keep getting creative as each new month presented brand-new challenges. That meant competitors from across the industry—hotels, suppliers, agencies, CVBs—who previously might have been tight lipped about their strategies realized, “Hey, this is going to be a LOT less painful and work out a LOT better for all of us if we share what’s working and what’s not working in real time.” Having this type of relationship with fellow boutique agency owners was essential for us in surviving the pandemic, and I know these are relationships I’ll be able to call on for years to come. I have always been a fan of the “collaborate don’t compete” mindset, so I hope this spirit of collaboration is here to stay in 2022 and beyond.



# 19



**Julie Novack**, CEO & Co-Founder, PartySlate

Our PartySlate team is especially excited about the resurgence of corporate events. Conferences, product launches, and employee events will be bigger than ever in 2022. With a larger percentage of the workforce working remotely, we are seeing companies increase budgets on events to help build culture, retain employees, and recruit top talent. On PartySlate.com, we have also seen a huge increase in search volume for themes. Because employees have been apart for so long, we believe these fun themed parties will help break the ice and create memorable celebrations.

# 21

**Bri Marbais**, Bridal Stylist, The Bridal Finery

If the last two years taught the wedding industry anything, it's definitely community over competition. With so much uncertainty and constant change, we as a group of dedicated and passionate professionals have all come together for the greater good. Moving into 2022, we as an industry are stronger than ever and are ready to give couples the weddings they've been waiting for and dreaming of.



# 20

**Julianne Smith**, The Garter Girl

I think kindness will be on-trend for weddings and events in 2022, and it's giving me so much hope. Whether that's kindness our clients are sharing with overworked and stressed-out vendors (looking at myself here) or the kindness that event attendees are showing each other, I think the world is so thankful to get back to connecting in person that they can't help but be grateful. Given all the staffing issues and supply chain problems, the only way to celebrate IRL in 2022 is to be kind.







**Erin Branham**, CSEP, President, A2 Events

**22** Here in Florida, we are seeing a very strong return to in-person events! We have been booked solid all fall as clients aim to squeeze in two years' worth of events into just a few short months. We are finding that our clients want to be together again, and they want to celebrate in style, spending more of their budget on upscale details and making experience and being together a big priority. Many new brands have chosen Miami over other destinations this year because international travel proved impossible and they knew that in Florida, the decision to postpone would ultimately be up to them rather than city or state restrictions. Florida may be an early indicator of what is to come for the rest of the country because the pent-up demand for in-person events here is very real!



**23**

**Sarah Davidson**, CPCE, Chief Strategist + Creative Director, HUE by Sarah Davidson

I'm looking forward to our industry collectively reevaluating their priorities and recognizing their worth. In doing this, I believe event professionals may make different and better decisions than they used to related to work/life balance, the rates they charge, and what types of clients they want to work with. This is a win-win for both vendors and clients in building more harmonious partnerships and successful events into the future.

# 24



**Tisha Holman**, Digital Strategist, Author, and Conference Speaker, [MindYourBizLLC.com](http://MindYourBizLLC.com)

As we swing into 2022, I expect that businesses will have to focus more on strategy than ever before. Many businesses used the downtime during COVID to really innovate how

they are showing up in the marketplace and making more impactful connections with their customers. We are in an amazing place in that regard! Creativity is at an all-time high and businesses are positioned to shine and thrive in the online space. Ride the wave and reap the rewards!



# 25

**Manda Weaver**,  
Manda Weaver Photography

2022 will be the year of weddings and events filled with high-touch experiences that celebrate the present joys of life together. I expect to see more people on the dance floor, and nights ending with private last dances for the couples instead of grand exits. There will be a sense of continuing strength in the close-knit relationships that helped us survive 2020 and 2021, and exuberance in expanding our experiences and our circle of relationships again. We will party both big and small in 2022!!! ●





## ON TREND



One color palette that will be trending in 2022 is black and white. Photo courtesy CORT Events

# Sitting Pretty in 2022

By Amber Kispert

## When designing events in 2022, it will be all about comfort and hominess.

"We're really focused on environments that feel like home. We want comfortable environments, and our attendees want to be comfortable now that they're venturing back out into events and shows and meetings," says Kevin Dana, Executive Director of Merchandising and Product Development for CORT Events.

Dana discussed the biggest event design trends we can expect to see in 2022 during a recent webinar, hosted by

*Special Events* magazine.

"[2022] trends are going to make an impact," Dana said. "They're going to reflect what's happening in our society, in our culture, and in our economy."

## THE MACRO TRENDS

2022 will be defined by a trio of design styles that evoke a sense of calm through eclectic use of color, layers, patterns, and fabrics.

"It'll be about mixing all sorts of elements together to create a new look that is a little more refined," Dana says.

### *Modern bohemian*

First up is modern bohemian, which

will leave behind the stark, modern looks that have become so popular in recent years, and instead will be embracing a reimagined traditional design sensibility.

By utilizing traditional craftsmanship and materials, inspired by natural elements, modern bohemian, including the Danish modern style, creates a contemporary design through its emphasis on mixed materials including wood, metal, and marble.

### *Art deco*

Art deco utilizes classic simple forms in seating, with curvy, elegant shapes that are romantic and luxurious when upholstered with lush fabric and velvet

that complement natural woods. More, eclectic layering of geometric patterns and shapes helps to create a dramatic and sophisticated aesthetic.

### ***Retro modernism***

The final trend for 2022 is retro modernism, which incorporates bold patterns and vibrant colors reminiscent of the '70s and '80s.

Additionally, rich textured fabrics are juxtaposed with masculine elements, such as black metal, marble and granite, wood and metallics. Prints and patterns are also a defining element of retro modernism.

## **LET'S TALK COLOR**

There's no denying the role color plays in evoking the mood and tone of a space.

"Colors have power," Dana says. "They make you feel things, they make your attendees feel things."

There will be a sense of dichotomy when talking color as we move into 2022 since the trending colors will sit on two different sides of the spectrum: warm and comforting on one end and bold and vibrant on the other.

"It's just how people are feeling right now," says Dana. "On the one end you have those calming colors that really help put us in a place where we're feeling more comfortable, but on the other you have the bright colors that add energy to a space. It just depends on how people want to experience an event."

### ***Green***

Varying shades of green are poised to be the top colors of 2022 since they pair so well with just about anything.

"Green is a color that plays with most other hues," Dana says.

On the cozy side, expect to see basil, moss, olive, sage and avocado; whereas on the more vibrant end you'll see chartreuse, kelly, moody forests, and emeralds.

### ***Blue***

Cool and warm blue tones continue to be a design staple; providing a sense of much needed serenity, with such shades as midnight and navy. Expect blue-gray to also make a prominent play.

### ***Warm neutrals & comforting earth tones***

Additional colors that help bring in the sense of calm include warm neutrals (ivory, cream, beige, and taupe), as well as rustic reds and soft orange tones (adobe, terracotta, mocha, salmon, and coral).

### ***Bright & bold***

On the other end of the color spectrum will be dramatic and colorful



(Above) One of the major design trends for 2022 will be modern bohemian, which is leaving behind stark, modern looks and embracing a return to a reimagined traditional design sensibility. Photo courtesy 501 Studios/Leui Ellyson





In terms of event layouts, sanctuary seating will be trending in 2022. Sanctuary seating is essentially owned space, that includes everything an attendees needs for the duration of a meeting or event, including comfortable seating, a table, refreshments and materials. Photo courtesy Jason Hornick

jewel tones and bright hues that will add energy and vibrancy.

## COZY CURVES

2022 will be all about cozy and comfortable fabrics (boucle, faux sheep fur, chenille, shaggy upholstery, and velvet) on furnishings that embrace their curves, including large sectionals.

“The biggest story in fabrics right now is textures,” Dana says. “These are the fabrics that feel like they’re giving you a warm hug. And they work well with curvilinear furnishings since it’s a softer look. It marries well with the fabrics.”

Modular seating in curvy configurations allow guests to spread out or sit near other attendees, depending on their comfort levels.

## GETTING TRENDY

The biggest design concepts in 2022 for meetings and events will be sanctuary seating, outdoor spaces, charging stations and accessories. Here we take a look at a few of them.

### *Ottomans & side tables*

2022 will see a lot of designers embracing the power of small furnishings within event and meeting spaces, specifically ottomans and side tables since they allow for plenty of flexibility in terms of colors and shapes.

Most importantly, they put the power of the event in the hands of guests.

“It’s really a great piece of furniture to have in a design because guests and attendees can move them around,” Dana says. “That’s even more important now as guests decide how they want to be in a space, and this allows them to bring a table or ottoman with them.

“You can allow your guests to experience the event the way they want to, they can create impromptu moments for networking, for collaborating and connecting.”

### *Personalized spaces*

Personalization will be a defining feature in meetings and events in 2022. For starters, sanctuary (or owned) seating will be increasingly in demand as attendees look to have a space that

is theirs for the duration of the event. Cabaret-style seating will replace the traditional classroom and theater style seating of years past during conferences.

Another way to give attendees a more personalized experience is to invest in furnishings with charging stations built right in given that our increasingly technological society isn’t going anywhere.

“Our devices aren’t going anywhere, so it’s more important than ever to stay connected,” Dana says. “So why not incorporate it into the furniture?”

Accessories will also play a key role in personalizing a space, examples could include adding branded pillows and rugs, or installing greenery to bring a bit of the outside in.

“These can help get the theme of your event out there, while setting the mood,” says Dana.

“As we design, we need to think about that because that’s what’s really driving the industry now. Creating these environments that really feel like home.” ●



## MARKETING & MEDIA

# Three Core Analytics to Track This Season—Whether You're Busy or Not



**Your website analytics can shed light on significant gaps** and reveal the areas of your strategy that need tightening up.

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[thespecialeventshow.com](http://thespecialeventshow.com).

### By Christie Osborne

**As the excitement** of the new year settles down, the industry is preparing for what's expected to be one of the busiest seasons on record. Many event professionals anticipate being fully booked out in 2022 as we collectively try to catch up on the postponed events from the pandemic.

But, what if you're not as busy as you expected? It might feel frustrating to see industry colleagues stretched thin by a non-stop stream of clients when you still have capacity in your business.

Rest assured that it's nothing personal! Instead, slow business in a busy period is a sign your marketing funnel is leaking. Fortunately, your website analytics can shed light on significant gaps and reveal the areas of your strategy that need tightening up.

The three vital metrics you need to track—acquisition, demographics, and behavior—will highlight where the leak is so you can address it before it's too late and make the most of the rest of the year.

On the other hand, if your schedule is already filling up, these reports can still be helpful when viewed from another perspective. Read to the end to learn how to review analytics when time—and energy—is at full bandwidth.

Let's explore each of these reports in detail.

### Acquisition report

First and foremost, you need to ask yourself the most fundamental question of them all: *Am I getting enough traffic?* If traffic to your website is low, it's likely because your marketing efforts aren't

sticking with your audience. It may be related to an inconsistent online presence, disjointed branding, or confusing messaging.

Whatever it may be, reviewing your analytics will reveal the rate at which people visit your website and the sources that lead them there. The Acquisition dashboard will reveal valuable data about how people are finding your website, as well as the tactics in your marketing mix that are most effective.

Say you are a member of a paid directory, you are running Facebook ads, and you are pushing a robust Pinterest campaign—all at the same time. The Acquisition by Channel report reveals which of these efforts produces the most traffic (and the least), providing you with insight to adjust your marketing approach. Perhaps you find the money you've invested in a directory membership is better allocated to Pinterest ads (or vice versa). Knowing is the first step to optimizing your strategy and seeing meaningful results.

If you are not seeing the traffic you'd like, use the Acquisition report to focus your resources on the tactics that work best and let go of underperforming techniques. You may find that freeing up your plate of ineffective marketing efforts allows you to try new ideas that serve your audience better, like email drip campaigns or brand partnerships.

### Demographic and interests report

High traffic with low conversions is a good sign that the people landing on





your website are not your ideal clients. Unqualified leads are those that fall outside of your target audience, whether it's a different geographical location, age group, or gender identity. But how can you know whether your website visitors are a fit?

Enter: Your demographic and interests report.

Demographic data shows you where your visitors live, how old they are, how they identify, and even their general interests. Consider whether the actual information in the report aligns with whom you want to serve. If, for example, you target middle-aged CEOs in New York City for corporate events, it does little good to attract newly engaged couples in their 20s from San Francisco.

This data may also reveal sources of bad traffic, like bots coming from other countries to crawl your site. Use this report to confirm the quality of your traffic and make adjustments as needed. Perhaps you need to consider new outlets for advertising, use more local tags on social media, or update Google My Business to attract the right leads.

## Behavior report

You've got the traffic...and it seemingly aligns with your demographics...so why aren't you getting the conversions? If the first two reports don't ping any red flags, it's likely that the marketing leak

is on your website. It's possible that prospective customers find it difficult to navigate or that it's missing pertinent information needed to take action.

The behavior report shows you exactly how your visitors spend their time on your website. What pages are they looking at? Where do they spend the most time? Most importantly, where are they dropping off the most?

Use this report to determine whether your website visitors actually want to do business with you and how to increase your rate of conversions. For example, if you're losing them on the Services page, you might consider including more transparent pricing. If the contact page is an issue, it may be a matter of needing a bolder call to action that challenges them to follow through.

Together, these three reports will help you identify leaks in your marketing funnel if you find that you're not quite as busy as you'd hoped.

However, they are just as valuable if you're wall-to-wall with deadlines, appointments, and other responsibilities. While you may be busy this season, what happens when you're no longer relying on a backlog of client work? Tracking these metrics will keep your marketing healthy so you're still in a good place when the industry settles down.

The key difference for busy entrepreneurs will be to run these reports with year-over-year

comparisons. Going forward, the goal should be to maintain or grow your traffic rates. YOY reports provide you with an at-a-glance look at where your business currently stands.

Since you don't have time to deep dive, this allows you to soften your gaze and identify general trends rather than digging into every little number. For example, if you notice a downward trend in traffic, but you confirm it's qualified and interested in taking the next step, all you have to focus on is increasing traffic.

Regardless of how your season looks, remember that basic traffic data is only one piece of the puzzle. You must consider the people behind each visit to ensure the majority are potential leads that would realistically book your services. Once you can confidently confirm the quality of your traffic, you'll watch your conversion rate grow and your inbox fill up with inquiries. ●

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**Christie Osborne** is the owner of Mountainside Media ([mountainsidemedia.com](http://mountainsidemedia.com)), 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 Catersource + The Special Event, NACE Experience, WIPA, and the ABC Conference.

# Four Shifts in the Wedding Industry Over the Last Year

BY BRITTNY DRYE

2021 has been an interesting year, to say the least. Thanks to a global pandemic, a mass social upheaval, and an economy teetering on the brink of a recession, the wedding industry has experienced rapid shifts in the market, impacting professionals and couples alike.

Fortunately, the event industry is made up of adaptable creatives who have handled the ever-changing landscape



with grace. While we saw some temporary adjustments to weddings in the past year, several significant shifts will continue to transform the way we do business and interact with the market.

Here are the four must-know changes to consider as you prepare for what's expected to be the busiest wedding season on record.

## A "WEDDING BOOM" FOR THE AGES

A year's worth of postponed events has caught up with the industry, driving business up and filling calendars for industry professionals across the globe. In addition, the uptick in weddings has affected timelines and availability, keeping our time in high demand.

With 2022 gearing up to be the biggest wedding season we've seen in decades, expect to maintain this pace for

“The event industry is made up of adaptable creatives who have handled the ever-changing landscape with grace.” – Brittney Drye

at least two years before seeing schedules go back to “normal” pre-pandemic levels. As a result, burnout will become a major concern, so expect conversations about mental health and work/life balance to become much more common.

## A SOCIAL RECKONING AND REALIGNMENT

The tragedies of 2020 launched a long-overdue conversation about systemic racism and the inequalities that underline every aspect of society. A spotlight on the disparities and biases present within the wedding industry at large has ushered in a much-needed change this year. Diversity and inclusion have become the driving factors behind conference speaker lineups and referral networks to staffing and preferred vendor lists.

Wedding professionals are more intentional about who they partner with and how they can turn their values into meaningful actions. In that, many businesses are finally making moves to educate themselves, put their team through D&I training, and align their business operations with their values.

## AN EVOLVING MARKET

As many millennials trade in their wedding invites for baby announcements, it's time for the industry to set its sights on the up-and-coming Generation Z as they age into the prime demographic for weddings.



Diversity and inclusion have become the driving factors behind conference speaker lineups and referral networks to staffing and preferred vendor lists. Wedding professionals are more intentional about who they partner with and how they can turn their values into meaningful actions. *Photo courtesy Ash Simmons Photography*



# SOI 2022



The modern couple wants to invest in brands and services that are not just talented but also align with their social values. Additionally, over the past couple of years, couples have repositioned their priorities and put more stock in quality time with loved ones. *Photo courtesy Judson Rappaport Photography*

industry. Consider how these fit into your plans as you review the wins and losses from 2021 and set goals for the year ahead. Perhaps it's time to invest in D+I training, or maybe you need to adjust your marketing strategy to demonstrate your activism authentically. It all starts with setting the intention and planning how you will take action. ●

**Brittney Drye** is the founder and editor-in-chief of Love Inc., one of the leading equality-minded wedding blog and digital publication. Her inclusive efforts have been celebrated by the *New York Times*, *The Advocate*, *OUT Magazine*, *Refinery29*, *NY Daily News*, *Cosmopolitan*, and more. She serves on the 2018-19 North American Advisory Board for the International Academy of Wedding & Events.

Thus, wedding professionals must be mindful of Gen Z's core values, habits, and preferences.

The modern couple wants to invest in brands and services that are not just talented but also align with their social values. Being vocal about socio-political issues on social media may have been a faux pas in the past. Still, today's market wants to know what your brand considers important and how you're addressing it.

## A FOCUS ON MEANING AND INTENTION

Micro-weddings are here to stay, as COVID continues to influence the way weddings look and feel. Even as the

pandemic settles down and becomes less of a factor, there has been a fundamental shift in the way couples plan their wedding.

Over the past couple of years, they have repositioned their priorities and put more stock in quality time with loved ones. As a result, guest lists are being shortened, with budgets redistributed to a more thought-out guest experience for a smaller group. If you've been considering getting into micro-weddings (or their even smaller counterparts, minimonies), you have not missed the train—these scaled-down celebrations aren't going anywhere.

We will surely see these trends evolve as we head into 2022, along with the introduction of new changes to the

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●●●  
**FOOD FOR FÊTES**

A grand Paella Valencia pan was filled with seafood, chicken, pork, and veggies cooked with a flavorful sofrito and saffron-scented rice. Guests scooped up their favorite ingredients to build their own plates out of this 42-inch-diameter dish of deliciousness. This grand paella represents the Spanish influence on San Antonio. The city still celebrates with an annual Paella Challenge where top chefs and high school culinary teams compete for the best paella.

*Photo courtesy Kathleen Stoehr*

# Heritage Meets Culinary Innovation with *Tex-Next* Tastes

by **Kathleen Stoehr**

**SAN ANTONIO, TX'S THE RK GROUP** was tasked with delighting the palates of some of the most discerning catering and event executives in the U.S. and abroad. The occasion? A "Commissary Night" showcasing the many culinary facets that make up this Texas town's distinctive character, the legacy of 75 years in business, as well as The RK Group's incredible 140,000 square foot headquarters which houses much of its culinary, administrative, décor, floral, and support operations. What a stunner of a facility!

Guests took a progressive and guided tour through the complex, with passed appetizers, dinner stations, and libations all along the way. Fun surprises and incredible hospitality, coupled

with an amazing ice carving contest to end the evening (see page 50 for more) left all in attendance with a most memorable experience.

"In 2017," says Art Menchaca, Director of Business Development for The RK Group, and instigator of this beautiful evening, "San Antonio was designated a Creative City of Gastronomy by UNESCO, signifying the city's status as an international culinary destination. Our culinary legacy is a confluence of cultures, but it isn't just about Tex-Mex, it is also Tex-Next, where heritage meets culinary innovation."

Take these delicious fete foods straight from the source for your next Tex-Mex themed gathering—no matter where your event is located—and your menu will be on trend! ●

*All photos courtesy of The RKD Studio unless otherwise specified.*



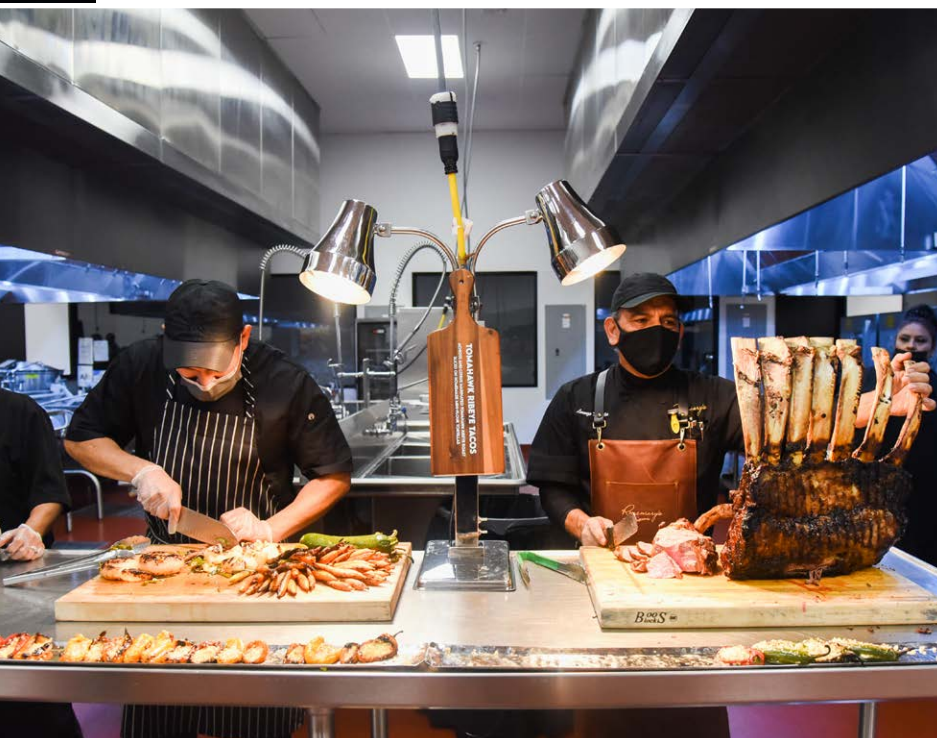
(Above) A d'oeuvres served in donut holes, all wrapped with hollandaise sauce. Note the



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(Right) As the sun set over the city's skyline, Sunset Margaritas were served, featuring a Chamoy and chili rim with straw enrobed in achote for extra zest.  
*Photo courtesy Kathleen Stoehr*

(Below) In the kitchen, Texas-sized Tomahawk Ribeyes marinated in achote and citrus—an RK Group signature item—were sliced for tacos and included an eye-popping array of condiments including homemade mini flour tortillas, grilled cippolinis and poblano peppers, roasted tomato and serrano salsas, charred Anaheim chili verde, queso fresco, lime, pickled red onions and cilantro. Most fascinating was the adjacent tortilla machine, which can make up to 900 tortillas per hour.



A kolache station represented the rich history that the German and Czech immigrants brought to San Antonio.



As guests entered the facility, passed hors d'oeuvres included brisket shishito rellenos, lobster and quail bites: a quail breast and jalapeno bacon and grilled, topped with buttermilk. The ingredients listed on the server's towel.



The "Galveston Beach Grill" beckoned with slash and burn redfish rubbed with fresh citrus and spiced dust, grilled pineapple pico de gallo and mango chutney, sea salt and vinegar fingerlings, and jicama slaw.





## FOOD FOR FÊTES



(Left) No Tex-Mex event is ever complete without chili on the menu, especially when it is named for San Antonio's infamous Chili Queens: women who served food in San Antonio's Military Plaza as early as the 1860s. A trio of venison chili, smoked chicken and poblano, and Hill Country three bean and tomato (V) made it hard to choose from. As always, guests couldn't forget the fixin's, which included Longhorn cheddar, fresh jalapeno, sour cream, Fritos, pepitas, yellow onion, crispy tortilla threads, and freshly baked cheddar cornbread.

(Below) Brisket shishito relleno appetizer



(Above) As guests began to exit the complex, they were greeted with assorted French pastries, sweet treats, and cognac, a nod to the European influences on the city of San Antonio.

(Right) Handmade corn masa patties (gorditas) were grilled to order hot from an Evo grill outside the venue and could be topped with a choice of refried beans, cheddar, Monterey Jack, guacamole, jalapenos, a variety of salsas, sour cream, and butter.

*Photo courtesy Kathleen Stoehr*





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# Event Technology: Mythbusting Common Misconceptions



**By Nora Sheils**

**In the past** couple of years, the event industry has seen significant growth in technology usage due to pandemic restrictions and the rise of virtual communication. From Zoom consultations to automated online payments, industry professionals have adapted their processes to meet demands.

As we experience the late stages of the pandemic, many are ready to get back to the way things were before. Suffice it to say, though, the “new normal” we are approaching will not look anything like 2019 and earlier. Technology has been ushered in as the way to do business, and it is here to stay. It’s what Millennials and Gen Z demographics want, and it’s ultimately what is best for business.

We will continue to see new advancements in hardware and software alike, so it is time to modernize our mindsets and get with the program(ing). But, unfortunately, as more companies welcome tech into their business operations, some are still hanging on to long-disproved myths that hold them back from reaching their full potential.

Let’s leave behind these misconceptions about event tech and start embracing the efficiency and reliability that comes with digital solutions and automation.

## **“MY BUSINESS IS FINE AS-IS.”**

While event professionals may have gotten away with the “I don’t need it”

excuse for years, COVID-19 turned the industry on its head. It forced even the laggards to implement virtual tools to continue doing business.

While we may be ready to leave the pandemic behind, the market has been irreversibly changed. Consumers now expect seamless digital experiences from the brands they hire; those who do not deliver will continue to fall behind competitors.

Your existing operations may not be broken, per se, but you must factor in what works best for your clients and what measures up to the other businesses in your market

## **“IT’S COST-RESTRICTIVE.”**

As tech capabilities grow, it is easy to get scared off by devices and software that cost thousands of dollars. How could you invest in something so pricy without knowing if you even need it? However, the reality is that advancements in technology have made it more attainable for businesses of all sizes.

There are digital solutions that accommodate every budget level, reducing the barriers of introducing tech within your business. Sure, there are deluxe virtual reality goggles that cost a small fortune, but there are also excellent models that cost a few hundred dollars. The same goes for software and other devices, so do not shy away from budget-friendly options that can support your business.

Recognize event technology for what it is: an investment in your business. Paying for a robust CRM saves you time, keeps your operations organized,

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and helps you get paid on time. A new feature for your business (like a virtual photo booth or video mapping equipment) can pull in a return far greater than your initial expense.

### **“WE DON’T HAVE THE TIME TO LEARN SOMETHING NEW.”**

It’s true—implementing new event tech takes time. But, it does not require as much as you may think! Modern developers prioritize user-friendliness in their designs to create products that work for people of all experience levels. Most programs and apps also offer comprehensive tutorials and walkthroughs to make it a smooth change.

Plus, consider that the time it takes to learn a new process and adjust your workflow will be returned tenfold when your operations are streamlined. The upfront investment of your time will set your business up to scale in ways otherwise impossible.

### **“I DON’T WANT TO CONFUSE OUR CLIENTS.”**

While this is a common excuse to push off implementing new tech, it is actually quite the contrary. At its core, event technology is designed to enhance the client experience and simplify the process for them.

Yes, you will need to talk current clients through the transition. But do not forget that today’s client wants—*no, demands*—a digital experience that fits seamlessly into their already-digital lives. They are quick learners and appreciate collaboration, so introducing new software to the mix will only support the process.

While every event business should be incorporating technology in some way or another, only you know where your company needs the most help. Whether it’s automating invoices, introducing a new digital product, or updating your payroll system, there’s no better time to bring your brand into the modern age. ●

**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.

## **See Nora Sheils at Catersource + The Special Event**

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# AS SEEN IN *San Antonio*

**W**orld ranked ice carvers battled it out in The RK Group's San Antonio parking lot to determine who could dazzle the audience more with their chainsaw prowess. Three 15-minute rounds revealed the winner, Buddy "Burr" Rasmussen, who works as the in-house ice sculptor at The RK Group. He sculpted a talon-wielding eagle picking up an unsuspecting rabbit. Rasmussen also brought home a silver medal in 2019 when he and Team Texas took second place in the Multi-Block Classic of the World Art Championships in Fairbanks, Alaska. ●  
— Kathleen Stoehr

*All photos courtesy of The RKD Studio*



The 8% inside the Texas outline refers to the just eight percent of ice sculptors who carve by hand only; they do not use any kind of computerized tools.

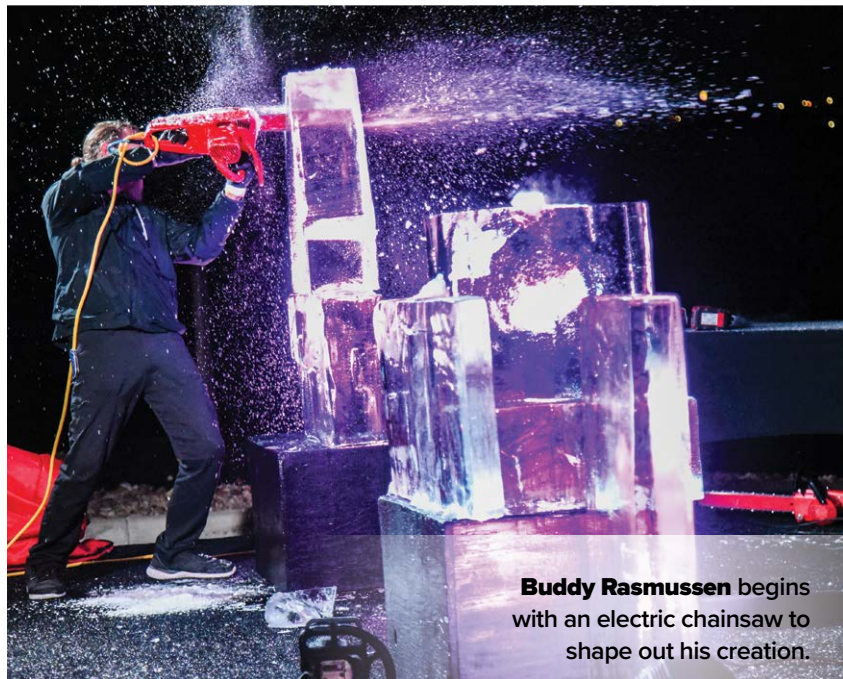


Hand chiseling (left) :  
development of **Chri**  
Company's final crea





The ice blocks were set; competitors began to enter the carving arena.



**Buddy Rasmussen** begins with an electric chainsaw to shape out his creation.



seems to be slowing the **Christopher Barnes** of Bad Bull in this round of competition.



**Buddy Rasmussen's** talon-wielding eagle picking up an unsuspecting rabbit won the competition.





**Editor's note:** Scott Frankel's expertise in technology, and his willingness to share his knowledge with our industry, is remarkable. It has been an honor to work with—and learn from—him. He has taught sessions at the show, and he has facilitated some of the most technical of feats for our awards programs and opening general sessions. It's my pleasure to have Scott talk about the future of event technology in this State of the Industry issue, and for those who want to hear more from him in 2022, be sure to register for The Special Event show in Anaheim this coming spring. —Kathleen

SOI 2022

# Tech Trends for 2022

By Scott Frankel

**In 2022**, you will continue to see the evolution of hybrid events. The tricky thing here is that the term hybrid is somewhat ambiguous. It's my belief that if you were to ask 100 planners what hybrid means, you will get 50 different (and probably correct) answers. Hybrid events continue to evolve. One might define a hybrid event as bringing in external speakers through a stream to play in front of an in-person audience. The same goes for streaming out a presenter at an in-person event to an external audience—and every combination thereof!

Planning a hybrid event is a safety net for planners, of course. If you are planning an in-person event and there is a pandemic resurgence (or honestly any other occurrence that might hinder attendance at an in-person meeting), your solution must be hybrid or virtual. It's much easier and cost-effective if you plan for hybrid even if you don't use it, as opposed to trying to build it in at the last minute.

I also believe that session/slide recording of content will make a comeback. At Animatic Media, our Conference-On-Demand service of onsite slide recording with post-event access has seen an increase of over 40% in the past few months. By doing this, planners can make content available for attendees who didn't make the trip to the in-person event or can enjoy more content they may have missed onsite due to overlapping schedules.

I feel the next "big thing" for events will be Augmented Reality or what we are calling "Enhanced Content." Using phones and other smart devices,

delegates can hold them up to various elements around an event that will superimpose enhanced content. This content may be on screens in a session room, monitors around the event, printed show graphics and signage, as well as exhibit booth materials. Some common uses are linking to premier sponsor websites, links to a presenter's LinkedIn account, and even video playback.

This is a two-step win as there are sponsorship and content revenue opportunities for show management as well as more of a "touchless" environment to promote sustainability (limiting the amount of printing waste), as well as benefits in keeping "touch points" more hygienic.

As far as COVID's future impact on the industry, you will see a sensitivity for procedures to protect staff, attendees, and speakers with health "passports." You may see more integration of automated temperature testing with notifications to show management, as well as touchless on-site registration.

My greatest hope in 2022 is everyone will be able to adapt to this new environment. I am hopeful that there will be a new sense of appreciation which will manifest into amazing service provided by industry vendors. I hope this pushes us to think more creatively and be more proactive in developing new methods. And of course, I hope that as we win the battle against COVID, corporate travel bans are lifted and the industry will boom once again. ●



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

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### EAST

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

Photo Credit: The Classic Catering People

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