

catersource®

A large, multi-tiered wedding cake is the central focus, completely covered in delicate pink roses. It sits on a white, ornate pedestal stand. The background is a solid light blue. The overall aesthetic is romantic and elegant.

**A BIG BET
ON THE
FUTURE**

P. 10

**ON THE MENU
WITH CHEF
ADAM MOORE**

P. 22

It's Wedding Season



{28} A Toast to
Afternoon Tea

{33} Virtual
Fundraising Galas



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JULY 19-22, 2021 | MIAMI BEACH CONVENTION CENTER

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MIAMI BEACH

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VOLUME 19, NUMBER 1



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First In, Last Out

I have been seeing a lot of social posts lately, as we hit the year mark of the pandemic. Things mostly like, “we didn’t know it then, but this was the last week that everything was still ‘normal’ for us.”

It’s true: the world that we live in now is not a world we have ever experienced. This past year reshaped everything that we knew about our industry and certainly opened our eyes to what consumers and politicians *didn’t* know—and still *don’t* seem to know—about event execution.

Catersource is an events company, too. We were very fortunate to be able to execute our yearly conference and tradeshow in 2020 before the country shut down; but had to punt like the rest of you to get through the year. Our Art of Catering Food conference in August 2020 was “dusted” like a vampire in contact with Buffy Summers’ stake. Our Leading Caterers of America Executive Summit, a three-day November gathering of high-level conversation and over-the-top evening parties became a day-long zoom meeting, accommodating five different time zones.

We made adjustments to remain viable, just like you, and then started planning for 2021.

Across the U.S., we can see that the pandemic is easing. As I write this note on March 8, the CDC released new gathering guidelines based on whether—or not—you have been vaccinated (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html). It’s hopeful, to be sure, and I know that by the time we get to July and our annual conference and tradeshow, we will be even more surefooted as a country.

We have a saying here at Catersource, as we head to our events: “First In, Last Out!” It has been the opposite this past year: first out by March 16, 2020, last in. But we will prevail. We are caterers, executives, manufacturers, suppliers, and make-up artists, we are DJs, technicians, musicians, planners, florists, and suppliers, we are sales and marketers. We know how to make it happen. And soon enough (for me it’s July at Catersource Conference & Tradeshow), I’ll be able to say once again, First in, Last Out. I’ll probably get a little teary eyed too.

For more on our live conference, turn to page 6. See you there.

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Don't just read... *Listen*

A top-down photograph of two hands holding white coffee cups filled with latte and dusted with brown powder. The cups are on a dark, textured wooden table. The image is framed by a dark red border with a distressed, torn-paper effect.

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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CONFERENCE NEWS

by Kathleen Stoehr

REGISTRATION IS LIVE for Catersource 2021!

CATERSOURCE UPDATE

Wondering how to navigate Catersource Conference & Tradeshow education sessions? What does the co-location with The Special Event mean in regards to your education experience?

Want to know who you should see and when? We have details for you here, from start of day on Tuesday, July 20 to end of day on Thursday, July 22. Read on!

You have a choice, and it's a tempting one. Buy a Catersource pass, buy a TSE pass, or buy a Combined pass. How do you decide? Let us break it down for you in the simplest way we can.

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JULY 19-22, 2021 | MIAMI BEACH

1. CATERSOURCE EDUCATION PASS

The **Catersource** education pass will give you access to all sessions on the Catersource side of the conference area, plus access to the "Bridge" stage, which stands at about the midpoint of the conference area (more on that in a minute). It also includes premier sessions such as the Opening General Session with keynote Pablos Holman on Wednesday morning, July 21, and Michael Cerbelli's The Hot List™: 2021 on Thursday, July 22.

Your pass also gives you access to the entirety of the tradeshow floor, including access to all exhibitors and sessions on the The Special Event side of the tradeshow floor. Bigger experience, more to see: enough to keep you busy and engaged for three full days of conference and tradeshow!

2. THE SPECIAL EVENT (TSE) EDUCATION PASS

A **TSE education** pass works almost exactly like the Catersource education pass does, just on the opposite side of the conference area. Enjoy



The Bridge stage, featuring speakers who have topics applicable to both the catering and events industries, is where you can meet up with attendees from The Special Event, because it is open to everyone! (Left) **Christina Matteucci** will present two sessions, including “The Audacious Transparency of Your Personal Brand.” (Right) A favorite from The Special Event will now be available to Catersource audiences: **Barbara Khizam** will present “How to Deal with Difficult People in Difficult Situations.”

access to all sessions on the TSE side, plus access to the “Bridge” stage, which stands at about the midpoint of the conference area. It also includes premier sessions such as the Opening General Session with Pablos Holman on Wednesday morning, July 21 and Michael Cerbelli’s The Hot List™: 2021 on Thursday, July 22.

This pass also allows access to the entirety of the tradeshow floor (including the Catersource side), with access to all exhibitors and sessions in the same way the Catersource pass does.

3. COMBINED OR ALL ACCESS EDUCATION PASS

Of course, you can’t attend everything—there are way too many sessions between the conference and tradeshow floor over three days. But, if you’re up for the challenge and want access to both conference programs—go for it! Buy a Combined or All Access pass and move between the two conferences like the star you are.





Enjoy breakout sessions from hot speakers such as **Shakira Brown**; **Julia Conway**; **Bron Hansboro**, and **Fausto Pfifferer**



Your Bridge stage experience continues with speakers like **Anthony Lambatos** on leadership; **Taylor DeMartino** headlining an elaborate floral demo; **Dima Ghawi** on diversity and inclusion; and selling in any economy with **Stan Peake**.



On the Culinary Experience stage, see **Chef Keith Lord** discuss adding cache to your menu offerings with unusual ingredients; and the team from UNLV Hospitality, including **Candice Imam** will live demo and show you how to put together your own virtual cooking event; **Chef Greg Taylor** will talk beautiful food displays; and **Chef Emily Ellyn** will knock it out of the park with a variety of sessions.



Also on the Bridge: "Cause for Celebration" with **Kristin Banta**, **David Merrell**, **Michael Stavros**, and moderator **Clint Upchurch**.

What are you doing to keep your attendees healthy and safe during the event?

We want you all to know that we are keeping your health and safety at the conference top of mind. COVID-19 restrictions are continually changing but we confer with the Miami Beach Convention Center often to ensure we are apprised of all initiatives. Additionally, our own Informa AllSecure measures are taken very seriously. As for the event space at the convention center—it's huge. We can easily distance and still have a robust attendance.

If you want to review Informa AllSecure, go to informa.com/about-us/allsecure. You can also find it on our show websites. There are 10 initiatives, which include specifications surrounding cleaning and hygiene, physical distancing, and detection.

What is the Bridge stage that was referred to earlier?

The Bridge stage was first launched in 2020 to great success. Educational content on the Bridge stage contains a wonderful mix of topics we feel that—no matter what industry you are in, you can benefit from the information provided. So, whether it's a discussion about diversity and inclusion; a session that teaches you how to embrace what is unique to only you; a stellar panel of industry greats offering trends and financial guidance post-COVID; or a colorful and inspiring demonstration on the latest floral trends—you will find it on the Bridge stage.

I really want to have no boundaries at this conference. Sounds like a Combined or All Access pass is the right one for me... but I also know there are going to be times when I want to be in two places at once. What are my options?

We do not restrict you from session hopping. If you find one is not right for you, or you want to vet two sessions in the same time slot, by all means, grab a seat near the back and move in and out of sessions at your leisure. This goes for whether you buy a Combined pass or a singular conference pass (that is, hop from varied sessions within the same conference—we won't stop you!). Another option is to buy a separate audio recording package (which is also included as part of our All Access pass). Most of our speakers will allow audio taping of their sessions, which will give you a means to experience anything you missed—or want to revisit—after the show is over.

What about all of the other sessions at the events? Where can I learn more about them?

Your best bet is to go to schedule.catersource.com and breeze through the many confirmed sessions. You can log in and begin building a schedule of your “must attend” choices—which may also help you decide which pass you want to buy. Both Catersource and The Special Event sessions are on the site. Sort by pass, sort by conference, or look at the entirety. **CS**





A Big Bet on the Future

As many of you know, we at Footers Catering pride ourselves on creating a great place to work. Being intentional about our culture has made us successful and provided incredible opportunities for our company and our team.

Although we love our perks, benefits, and fun, creating a great place to work goes well beyond those things and for us centers around loving what we do and who we do it with. We've recognized that part of "loving what you do" is finding ways to challenge our team and create opportunities for growth. When these things happen, people take pride in their jobs, feel a sense of fulfillment, and are genuinely excited about coming back to work the next day.

In December 2019 we had the opportunity to sell our current facility and purchase a new space that would encompass the next chapter of personal and professional growth for our team. The 40,000 square foot building we found to be our home would take us beyond just off premise catering and into running an event center, having a headquarters for our sister company, Mibe Tribe, and opportunities for future business endeavors. The build-out would take eight to nine months while we leased back our old building. We believed that within a year we would see this dream come to reality.

Two weeks turns into...

Then March 2020 hit. And like many of you, it hit us hard. What we originally thought would be a two to four week pause turned into...well, you know—here we are a year later. In addition to figuring out how to save our business, we also had to decide if we would move forward with our build-out. There were a lot of difficult

“THIS PROJECT HAS GIVEN OUR TEAM HOPE, SOMETHING TO LOOK FORWARD TO, AND DURING AN EXTREMELY TRYING YEAR, IT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE NEEDED.”



conversations that took place, but at the end of the day we felt like there were two options. One, that we believed that COVID-19 would fundamentally change events and gatherings forever and in that case, we needed to get out of the catering business. Or two, that our desire as humans to interact in person and gather in large settings would be strong enough to return at some point, and in that case, now was as good of a time as ever to build something for the future. We chose the latter.

The journey has been filled with challenges, and through those challenges we were able to recognize the silver lining. The construction was delayed while we debated what to do, but we were able to provide work for some of our team members on projects like painting offices, landscaping, and light demo. It was not catering events, but it was work.

Our bank changed the terms of the loan for the build-out two weeks before we were supposed to begin the project, stating that it was too much of a risk for them to loan money to a hospitality industry business at that time. I'm always an advocate of having multiple banking relationships and in this situation, it worked in our favor. Our "new" bank saw what we were trying to accomplish and believed in us enough to loan us the money for the project. That relationship is one of the best things to come out of the past 10 months. COVID-19 has been a built-in excuse for sub-contractors not meeting deadlines and although our move logistics and schedule

have been changed more times than I can count, we are grateful that we did not have to coordinate it with our typical calendar of events.

Social Capitol

We chose the name, Social Capitol, for the building and venue that will have a capacity of 1,200 people for a cocktail party and 500 plus for seated dinners. A capitol building for events, galas, and fundraisers, but also a play on the meaning of "Social Capital" which is a set of shared values that allows individuals to work together in a group to effectively achieve a common purpose. The idea describes how a community is able to band together to live harmoniously and that is in essence what has made Footers Catering successful for so many years.

This project has given our team hope, something to look forward to, and during an extremely trying year, it is exactly what we needed. We know we are fortunate to be in the position to make a move like this during the most challenging time of our professional careers. We also know that we would not be in this position without the many years of hard work and commitment of our team. They are the reason we have been able to weather the storm AND build for the future at the same time. As I write this, we are weeks away from having our certificate of occupancy and officially operating out of Social Capitol. Time will tell if this bet will pay off. Betting on our team, though, is not something we see as a risk, but rather an opportunity to create an environment where we can all thrive. 



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.



Catersource + The Special Event 2021 will provide the catering and event industry with an unmatched opportunity to learn the new skills needed to succeed. **Learn from these experts** and be part of the new era of catering and events!



Wednesday, July 21

Opening General Session Keynote Speaker
Pablos Holman

Futurist • Inventor of the First 3D Food Printer • Innovator • Problem Solver





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WEDDING FORECAST 2021

By Kathleen Stoehr



Despite all of the incredible hardships of the past year, people will fall in love, and people will want to marry. The trends? We're seeing them: smaller, more intimate, a focus on the guest experience, a larger budget for food and a smaller budget for venues and entertainment.

We have seen the colors Pantone announced for 2021, we have seen how technology has allowed family members to join a ceremony from afar...and how that same technology has impacted the destination wedding business. We've seen clients move dates multiple times and the impact that has had on our finances. But we are also beginning to see the rebound of a severely crippled industry, and we must be forward thinking. With that in mind, let's look at a few of the overarching trends for 2021.

DESTINATION WEDDINGS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN CURRENTLY, BUT SOME ADVENTUROUS COUPLES ARE OPTING TO PROFESS THEIR VOWS AGAINST WANDERLUST BACKDROPS, SUCH AS THIS ELOPEMENT IN GREECE BY ELLWED. *Photo courtesy Adrian Wood Photography*

YOU WANT A SATURDAY? LOL!

With all of the date moves from 2020 into 2021 and beyond, an open weekend on anyone's schedule is golden. If you have any weekends available in 2021, charge more! Additionally, consider doing away with many of the "cost benefits and savings" of a weekday wedding. That's so...2019. It's flabbergasting that many of the consumer wedding articles and publications continue to expound that couples can get services "more cheaply" during the week. Okay, maybe in 2024 but for now, raise your weekday prices if you can.



IN AN ERA WHERE FOOD STATIONS AND FAMILY-STYLE SERVICE ARE PROBLEMATIC, CLASSIC PLATED DINNER SERVICE, SUCH AS THIS ONE FROM BLUE ELEPHANT EVENTS, IS MAKING A COMEBACK. *Photo courtesy Focus Photography*



DOWNSIZED GUEST LISTS

Yes, we will continue to see "micro" weddings or the new term you may have seen, "pintimate" weddings (that's a combo of personalized and intimate, and I personally despise the term. It's also not necessarily sustainable as a good "trend" word...but I digress).

As friends and family "safe" bubbles were built during the pandemic, woe-be-it that they be popped. Your couples have discovered who mean the most to them and will want to offer an experience to the loved ones who have been their "thick and thin" throughout one of the greatest (and most tragic) events of the 21st century. But this doesn't mean that couples don't want a beautiful venue, or that they can't have a DJ or live band. It just means that they are motivated to show those they love the most incredible night of their lives. Push this! Sell it! Micro weddings do not have to equate to micro budgets. Follow the footsteps of wedding planner Marcy Blum, who moved a downsized 300 to 30 person Miami wedding event onto a yacht, as reported by the *New York Times*. She clearly also used a drone to capture a birds eye view of the ceremony on the deck (<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/02/19/style/weddings-2021-coronavirus.html>). Swap out your minced chive

WEDDING CAKES HAVE SHRUNK IN SIZE, BUT NOT IN FLAVOR OR BEAUTY. FOR A SEQUEL PARTY, CONSIDER HOW A CAKE LIKE THIS COULD BECOME BITE SIZED PARTY FAVORS OR DESSERTS. *Photo courtesy TRK Photography*



ABOVE: CLASSIC PLATED DINNER SERVICE IS MAKING A COMEBACK. HERE, VINTAGE-STYLE GOLD RIMMED PLATES AND FLATWARE RACHET UP THE SPECIALNESS OF THE SERVICE. *Photo courtesy Richard Emmanuel Photography & Video*; RIGHT: BLUE ELEPHANT EVENT'S MINI COCKTAILS ARE SERVED IN EYE-CATCHING VESSELS. *Photo courtesy Focus Photography*



THIS "MICRO" WEDDING LOOKS ANYTHING BUT, INCORPORATING ALL OF THE DRAMA AND OVER-THE-TOP GRANDEUR OF A FORMAL WEDDING. AWASH WITH THE HIGH-END GOODNESS OF PEONIES AND OTHER REMARKABLE FLORALS, BY CHENAI HIGHLIGHTED HOW DESIGN CAN PLAY A KEY ROLE IN CREATING ATMOSPHERE AND AMBIANCE. *Photo courtesy Rebecca Goddard*

“Ensure your staff is trained in synchronized service—a spectacular show for your guests that ramps up the refinement of any meal.”

garnish for caviar on your lemon capellini for a plate upcharge, pitch out-of-season peonies for the bridal bouquet.

FORMALITY AT THE FOREFRONT

White glove service returns! Where we once reveled in the beauty and efficiency of the family-style meal, the elegantly plated and coursed meal is surging in popularity. Ensure your staff is trained in synchronized service—a spectacular show for your guests that ramps up the refinement of any meal. Brush up on your creative plating skills, make sure your linens and dinnerware are dazzling. If you are able, add Cart French service to your repertoire for VIP groups.

BRINGING BACK BUFFETS

Action stations should rev back up in 2021, set with all COVID precautions in place. It's way too fun to watch a talented chef prepare and serve to your client's specifications, to let this tried-and-true artistic spectacle be lost to the pandemic wind. Your masked and gloved chef, behind a protective barrier or shield, will wow your clients once again with their gastronomic expertise. Just keep your line queue distanced as per your state's requirements.

OUR WEDDING: THE SEQUEL

The *New York Times* recently reported on a couple who were married twice in one day. Once in one state for the bride's family, hopped a plane, changed clothes and married again in another state with the groom's family in attendance. This is not quite what I mean by, "our wedding: the sequel" though if you can sell a wedding two times you are almost there. I'd say sell it three times to that couple, because what the sequel truly means is small wedding during these times of upheaval...and a great big party later in the year when the masks



truly can come off. Book them two dates. Talk to your clients about how you can tie aspects of the wedding day into the "after" party. Is it the plated meal, now served smaller, as passed appetizers? Mini wedding cake desserts instead of the beautifully tiered cake served (or vice versa). How can you incorporate similar florals, colors, or perhaps make it reflect the tone of the destination they had hoped to spend their honeymoon?

FINALLY, BE SAFE

Beyond all of these trends that will assist us in understanding our clientele, the most important thing we must do, even as the vaccination brings the U.S. population to herd immunity...is be COVID-protocol prepared. In order for our venues to reopen, and for our clients to return, we must have safety precautions and proper guidelines in place.

Keep these four cornerstones at the forefront of your client communication:

Physical distancing or crowd density

guidelines: Follow your local authority's guidance for venue capacity and/or square feet per person. Use technology for crowd counting, ensure passages and areas around tables are sufficiently wide, and institute one-way traffic flow in and out of the venue if possible. If masks are required, establish



designated eating areas (this is where formal plated service excels!), and consider having servers place drink orders for guests versus queuing, or bar cart service to tables.

Cleaning & hygiene: Let your clients know that your venue is deep cleaned prior to move in and also shortly before the event opens. Establish a cleaning regimen that focuses on high touchpoint areas. Have a gloved and masked butler with hand sanitizer for guests as they enter. Consider your audio visual, such as microphones. If the father of the bride has used the microphone, ensure it is cleaned thoroughly (or have a spare) before allowing the best man to take it.

Detection: Assure your clients that your employees are tested regularly. Have a private room or other isolation area available for any guest to be taken, should they show signs of illness. If you are asked to supply onsite testing, have that cost and vendor service at the ready (and it won't be cheap!).

Communication: Use signage, decals, and props in playful ways to get your point across regarding safe practices. Don't put your servers in the position of policing guests but also do not expect that your employees are willing to put themselves in harm's way



because of a maskless, uncooperative guest. Support your staff first and foremost.

Please note: The above cornerstones are pulled from the Informa AllSecure guidelines. Informa is the parent company of Catersource.

Bottom line: get ready...weddings are returning, and they will roar! **CS**

TOP RIGHT: DESSERT ROSE WEDDING AND EVENTS CREATED A BOHEMIAN-INSPIRED WEDDING THAT INCORPORATED ALL SHADES OF NEUTRAL AND PLENTY OF NATURAL TEXTURES, WITH WARM CERAMICS, VINTAGE WOODS, GOLD METALLICS AND THE EARTHY TONES OF DRIED PRESERVES AND FLOWING MACRAME ALL COMPLEMENTING EACH OTHER. *Photo courtesy The Seitter Woodhouse*

TOP LEFT: BACKYARD WEDDINGS WILL CONTINUE TO TREND AS LONG AS VENUES REMAIN COMPROMISED. THAT DOESN'T MEAN THE COUPLE SHOULDN'T HAVE AN INCREDIBLE ALTAR SPACE. *Photo courtesy Rock Paper Coin*



A Proactive Sales Approach for 2021

Although the challenges of 2020 may have carried into 2021, we have the unique benefit of foresight as we embark on this unpredictable year.

When the pandemic struck last spring, it came rather unexpectedly, leaving industry professionals to scramble and react to the situation at hand. This year, we're still dealing with the repercussions of COVID-19, but most people have become seasoned in running a company amidst a global pandemic. We've struggled, we've cried, we've learned, and now, we can grow.

In a turbulent market, a proactive sales approach is a necessity. There simply isn't time to sit around waiting for prospective clients to find you. This year, you'll need to spend some time actively prospecting as the market—and the industry—grapple with the 'new normal' and the changes ushered in with the pandemic.

Today's client is experiencing feelings of uncertainty and concern, but also feelings of hope and optimism. By showing up in the right places, you can secure a reputation as a forward-thinking industry leader and remain top-of-mind with prospects until it comes time for them to make a purchasing decision.

While active prospecting does take more time than playing the waiting game, it can easily be done in an efficient manner to ensure that you're proactively gathering business and putting your best business foot forward in a tough year.

Put on your sales hat and follow these six strategic steps for proactive selling in 2021.

STEP 1: Establish your CRM platform.

Great CRM software can make prospecting an easy process, as it provides you with a database to store valuable information about each of your leads. You can keep track of how many times you have checked in throughout the sales process, log vital details like budget and event date, and assign your team members accordingly. Before starting to actively prospect, make sure your CRM is up to date so it can serve as a streamlined framework for your sales needs. Many catering software applications have built-in CRM, so it may be as simple as getting organized and utilizing it properly.

STEP 2: Review prospective company websites.

Corporate clients expect you to capture their brand and feel perfectly, so you need to study up

“THIS YEAR, YOU WILL NEED TO SPEND SOME TIME ACTIVELY PROSPECTING AS THE MARKET—AND THE INDUSTRY—GRAPPLE WITH THE ‘NEW NORMAL’ AND THE CHANGES USHERED IN WITH THE PANDEMIC.”

before starting any work. Just as your website tells your prospects everything they need to know about you; you can learn a wealth of information from a potential client’s company website. Review their “About” page to get to know their team and their company story. You can also learn a fair amount about a business by browsing its blog posts to see what they talk about most. Consider their core values and how they interact with others in a professional setting.

STEP 3: Scroll through their social media.

Everyone is on social media nowadays, so you should be able to access Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter accounts for many of your corporate, wedding, and social prospects. Dig into their profiles to see what they are posting about and who they are engaging with and take note of ways that you can relate to them. It does not need to be strictly professional; maybe they are a fellow wine lover or you both have pets—a personal element goes a long way in developing a human connection that builds the Know, Like, and Trust factors.

STEP 4: Visit them on LinkedIn.

While LinkedIn is considered a social media platform, I believe it is so valuable that it warrants a step of its own. LinkedIn often has more detailed information than a typical profile on Instagram or Facebook, so you can learn a lot about a

person or company’s achievements. Spend some time sifting through a prospect’s recent posts, experience, awards, and other notable features on their profile. In many cases, you can get a promising idea of their interests and what motivates them.

STEP 5: Look at their competitors.

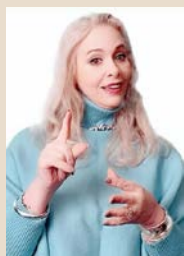
When you want to gain insight into your own market, you might head over to your competitors’ pages to see what has been keeping them busy. If you are looking to learn more about a prospect and their industry, take some time to review their top competitors and identify what sets them apart. You will be able to use this research to demonstrate your industry knowledge, and you might even find a few extra leads to add to your prospecting list.

STEP 6: Navigate around the gatekeepers.

When you are ready to make a sales call or send an email, you might encounter a gatekeeper—the person who is responsible for answering

phones and relaying messages to the real decision maker. If you want to connect with those in charge, you need to befriend the gatekeeper with kindness and consideration. In many cases, these gatekeepers have a fair amount of influence over the decision-makers’ choices, so a little bit of effort goes a long way. Be friendly, get to know them and, if possible, consider sending over a little gift to warm them up. Once you have the gatekeeper on board, their boss will be more open to listening and making their choice.

Now, this might seem like a lot to do to improve your business, but the secret is that it can be done in 15 minutes or less every day. In the beginning, you may have to spend more time optimizing your CRM and getting your systems in place. However, as proactive selling becomes a habit, it will become second nature and you will find yourself actively prospecting as leads come up. A little bit of time spent on intentional sales each day can make all the difference in 2021, pushing you forward in the most profitable direction. 



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.



By Julie Kendrick

Beautiful Babies & Bountiful Burgers



AT FLASHPOINT, CHEF ADAM MOORE WORKS WITH A TRUSTED NETWORK OF CHEFS, SCIENTISTS, AND STRATEGISTS TO PROVIDE CULINARY SUPPORT, PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT, SUPPLY CHAIN AND FOODSERVICE STRATEGY SERVICES. HE'S A PAST RECIPIENT OF THE RESEARCH CHEFS ASSOCIATION'S MOST INNOVATIVE PRODUCT AWARD, NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION'S FABI AWARD, AND BIIC AWARD OF EXCELLENCE FROM BUNGE NORTH AMERICA. *Photo courtesy Flashpoint Innovation*

After owning and operating a Cajun-themed restaurant in Indiana right out of college, Moore eventually made his way to Chicago, working for the 4 Star restaurant group. He's now running the show at Flashpoint, working with major food brands, national restaurant chains, and global marketing boards. Many of his clients, such as those highlighted below, provide the inspiration for his featured recipes, sharpening his focus on showcasing great ingredients with classic presentations.

Boozy brunch

Tangy, tasty apples are a comfort food go-to any time of year, since there's almost always one apple variety in season. Apples are also great pantry "keepers," so the ingredient costs for this stunning Dutch Baby will be low year-round. And since boozy brunch never goes out of style, Moore's addition of Angry Orchard Crisp Cider in both the batter and the topping ties everything together with a little something extra. "This is comforting, soul-enriching food," Moore says.

There's never been a better time to return to the culinary basics. Classic dishes with a comfort-food appeal are enjoying a renaissance at every type and style of event. Adam Moore, chef and president of Flashpoint Innovation, a Chicago-based food and beverage innovation network, understands that top-notch menus are built on a foundation of time-tested flavor combinations. "My culinary point of view has always been to focus on starting with great ingredients, having the right execution, and keeping everything as simple as possible," Moore says.



Better burger

One of Moore's favorite center-of-the-plate choices is True Aussie Beef, whose marketing board describes its product as an example of "food hugs." Moore loves the way it tastes, and he's also all-in with the brand's commitment to caring for the planet. "The

sustainability strides made by the Australian red meat industry are compelling," he says. "They've committed to becoming carbon neutral by 2030." His Australian grass-fed beef "better burger" can serve as an entrée or as sliders for a light lunch or cocktail hour. "The key to this burger is its fresh flavor," he says. 



**GRASS-FED BEEF
"BETTER BURGER"**

YIELD: 4

INGREDIENTS

1 lb Australian grass-fed ground beef
Kosher salt, for seasoning
Black pepper, for seasoning
Extra virgin olive oil, as needed
4 ea whole wheat burger buns
½ cup whole grain mustard
¼ cup non-fat Greek yogurt
1 ripe tomato, sliced thin
1 seedless cucumber, sliced thin
1 red bell pepper, sliced thin
1 red onion, sliced thin
Fresh herbs, as desired
1 head butter lettuce

METHOD

1. Preheat grill over HIGH heat.
2. Portion the ground beef into ¼ pound patties. Season with salt and pepper cook to desired doneness.

3. Meanwhile, in a small bowl, mix together the mustard and yogurt. Set aside.
4. In another bowl, toss together the remaining vegetables and herbs, except for the lettuce. Season with salt and let sit over a strainer to release excess water while the burgers finish cooking, about 5 minutes.
5. Toast buns and layer in the following order: bun heel, mustard-yogurt sauce, lettuce, burger, vegetable salad and the bun top.
6. Serve with your favorite side dish.

NOTE: Substitute your favorite farm fresh vegetables and herbs as you desire. The key to this burger is fresh flavor!



ANGRY APPLE DUTCH BABY

YIELD: 4

INGREDIENTS FOR DUTCH BABY

½ cup Angry Orchard Crisp Hard Cider
½ cup all purpose flour
3 eggs
1 T brown sugar
¼ tsp garam masala*
4 T unsalted butter

METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 425 degrees
2. Combine the cider, flour, eggs, sugar and spices in a blender and mix until smooth. You can also mix this by hand with a wire whisk, but make sure the batter is very smooth.
3. Next, add butter to a 10" skillet and place into the preheated oven. Once butter is melted, add the batter.
4. Return to the oven and bake for 12 to 15 minutes, or until the pancake is golden, yet the inside is still soft.

INGREDIENTS FOR ANGRY APPLES

1 T unsalted butter
½ tsp garam masala*
1 large apple (honeycrisp, fuji or green)
1 cup Angry Orchard Crisp Cider
2 T brown sugar
Powdered sugar, for garnish (optional)

METHOD

1. In a large saucepan over medium-high heat add the butter and spices. Cook until fragrant, about 1 minute.
2. Add the apple, cider, and sugar and reduce to a simmer.
3. Cook until the liquid is reduced to a syrup-like consistency—about 15 minutes.

TO SERVE

1. Cut the Dutch baby into 4 slices, top with the Angry apples and drizzle with the apple syrup.
2. Dust with powdered sugar (optional) and serve immediately.

NOTE: A pre-heated 10" pan gives the best "lift" to the pancake, but you can use a 12" too.

*You can substitute ground cinnamon and/or nutmeg for the garam masala. A 1:1 mix of each would be best.

Stationery & Branding

Photo courtesy Celine Kim Photography for Jordan Kentris, A Good Day



Design Trends for 2021



Photo courtesy Oana Foto for Jordan Kentris, A Good Day

By Jordan Kentris

With many events having been pushed from 2020, people are enthusiastically diving headfirst into all things design with guest experience topping the list of priorities for 2021 events.

But, the guest experience is not just about having fun onsite—rather, it's a fully immersive means to surprise and delight guests through a branded journey from event announcement to completion. What does this look like? Event branding typically includes monograms, signature design elements, and a cohesive design vision throughout all aspects produced for an event. Simply put, it's what sets apart an event from all the rest.

Event branding is a personalization layer that goes beyond putting a guest's name on a printed card. Instead, it's a pairing between branding and stationery that weaves in colors, textures, and design cues carried throughout the event experience, from save-the-dates to menus to thank you cards.

We see new branding and stationery trends arise each year, and it seems that we have quite a colorful year in store for us. Here's what to expect.



Photo courtesy Oana Foto for Jordan Kentris, A Good Day



Bold hues

Color has been at the top of mind for many clients as they plan their 2021 events. Bright, saturated colors have been popping up, with bold hues like emerald green, sky blue, persimmon, and fuchsia making a splash. For many, 2021 feels like a year for

celebration and revitalization, so they seek vibrant shades that breathe life into neutral-colored accents. This is notably captured in Pantone's Colors of the Year, Illuminating Yellow and Ultimate Gray, which can be paired to create stunning contrasts in tone and texture within event design.

Sustainable textures

Eco-conscious stationery has been on the rise in recent years and we'll see this trend come to a head in 2021, as people become more mindful of the waste produced when hosting events. Plantable invitations—as in seeded paper that can later be planted—are making a comeback due to their zero-waste nature. Similarly, boxed invitations are also a popular choice as guests can reuse the boxes for keepsakes after the event has passed.

Meaningful design

In 2021, people expect to bring more meaning and purpose to their paper goods. It's no longer about sending invitations just to convey information; stationery has become a key aspect of an event's overall branding and design, so clients are being intentional about their paper goods' style and mood. Stationery can create a sensory, tactile experience and people are taking that advantage to kick off the event experience and give guests an inkling of what they can anticipate.

Virtual meets physical

While 2020 was the year of virtual events, we won't see that go away so soon in 2021. Many people



will choose to host some aspect of virtual within their celebrations for those unable to travel or attend in person. Still, guests who are invited to a virtual event can have a branded event experience through physical invitations and gifting. Sending a box of goods for faraway attendees to enjoy the day of the event provides a heightened sense of inclusion and is a personal touch that truly goes the extra mile.

Consider the five senses as you build out the design elements that will bring your event to life, factoring in how guests will experience each piece as they interact with it. When you create a brand for an event that truly represents the host, you invite each guest into that world and provide them with an experience they'll never forget. **CS**

Event branding is a personalization layer that goes beyond putting a guest's name on a printed card.



Photo courtesy Charla Storey for Jordan Kentris, A Good Day



Jordan Kentris is the founder and owner of A Good Day (agooddayinc.com), a boutique design firm that creates one-of-a-kind stationery, establishing unique brands for each and every event. He was recently recognized by BizBash as one of the Most Innovative People in 2020 for his creative, holistic approach to virtual events.



By Amber Kispert

A *Spot(light)* of Tea



Legend has it that traditional English afternoon tea, often referred to as high tea, was started in the mid-1800s by the Duchess of Bedford. Around this time, kerosene lamps were introduced in wealthier homes, and eating a late dinner, around 8:00 or 9:00 p.m., became fashionable. The story goes that this increasingly late mealtime caused the Duchess to have a “sinking feeling.” This was likely fatigue from hunger during the long wait between meals. She decided to invite friends over for assorted snacks and tea, and the idea of an afternoon tea gathering spread across high society. Not only has traditional afternoon tea continued to be a staple throughout England, but it has begun to infiltrate the United States as well, possibly due to the popularity of such television programs as *Downton Abbey* and *Bridgerton*.

Proper Etiquette for English High Tea

All teas should be served decanted and hot. A selection of teas should include a minimum of one black tea, one green tea, and one herbal infusion. Enhancers for the table should include sliced lemon, sugar cubes, honey, milk, Devonshire or clotted cream, and preserves. Optional: Assorted nuts (raw or salted), and/or lemon curd.

The host/hostess or wait staff pours the first cup of tea for the guest. Prior to pouring, always ask the guest if they prefer milk and/or sugar—one lump or two.

As for the accompanying foods, the proper placement of items on a tiered stand include:

- **Top Tier:** scones, seasonal breads, and cheese sticks
- **Middle Tier:** sandwiches and savories
- **Bottom Tier:** sweets

Trifles and puddings are served individually as a separate course, if desired.

The proper order for consuming food, accompanied by tea of course, is:

- **First Course:** sandwiches and savories
- **Second Course:** scones, seasonal bread, and cheese sticks
- **Third Course:** sweets
- **Separate Fourth Course:** trifle, pudding, and seasonal berries

A few dos and don'ts when hosting a proper English tea:

- **Don't ever serve tea in a mug**
- **Do present your table beautifully**
- **Don't serve large portions**
- **Do use small utensils**





TRADITIONAL HIGH TEA HAS BEEN A STAPLE IN ENGLAND FOR MANY YEARS, BUT NOW IT IS STARTING TO BECOME POPULAR IN THE UNITED STATES AS WELL.
Photo courtesy Harris Tea

“Americans have always loved British traditions; in fact no matter what nation a tradition comes from it is always interesting for an outsider,” said Lisa Worthington, Head of Marketing for Spicers, a subsidiary of Harris Tea. “Plus, [high tea] is something different from the regular coffee routine.”

Proper pairings

So, what exactly makes for a proper afternoon or high tea?

“It’s something savory, followed by something sweet and always accompanied by tea,” Worthington said. “It also has to always be served in a teapot with a saucer and teacup, never a mug.”

Traditionally, some of the most popular varieties of tea to be served during afternoon tea include black teas like Earl Grey, Darjeeling, and Assam as well as herbal teas like chamomile and mint. It is recommended to use loose leaf tea rather than tea bags.

And of course, the food is just as important as the tea. Traditional pairings for afternoon tea include small sandwiches, scones with Devonshire or clotted cream, and other small desserts.

In recent years however, more restaurants and hotels are opting for a non-traditional approach to afternoon tea: rather than small sandwiches they are embracing open-faced bagels, soups, and in some cases even mini pizzas; and, in addition to a cup of hot tea, cocktails and bubbles such as cava are also being added.

Worthington said she has begun seeing a divergence from traditional tea varieties in favor of unique pairings, such as incorporating an Indian tea, such as a chai, with mini samosas, honey cakes, and other Indian-influenced bites. Another idea: embrace the growing vegan trend by pairing herbal teas with bruschetta or vegan cakes.

“You can be as creative as you want to be,” she said. “The basic elements



LONDON FOG

YIELD: 1

INGREDIENTS

- 1 cup strongly-brewed Earl Grey tea, brewed with ½ tsp dried lavender
- ½ cup steamed milk
- 1 T granulated sugar or other sweetener
- ¼ tsp. vanilla extract

METHOD

1. Brew Earl Grey tea and lavender together, and steep for 3 minutes
2. Remove tea bag and strain out the lavender.
3. Stir in remaining ingredients until combined.
4. Serve warm.



CHAMOMILE MAR-TEA-NI

YIELD: 1

INGREDIENTS

- ½ tsp Chamomile loose tea leaves
- 4 oz boiled water
- 2 oz gin
- ½ oz honey
- 1 oz fresh pink grapefruit juice

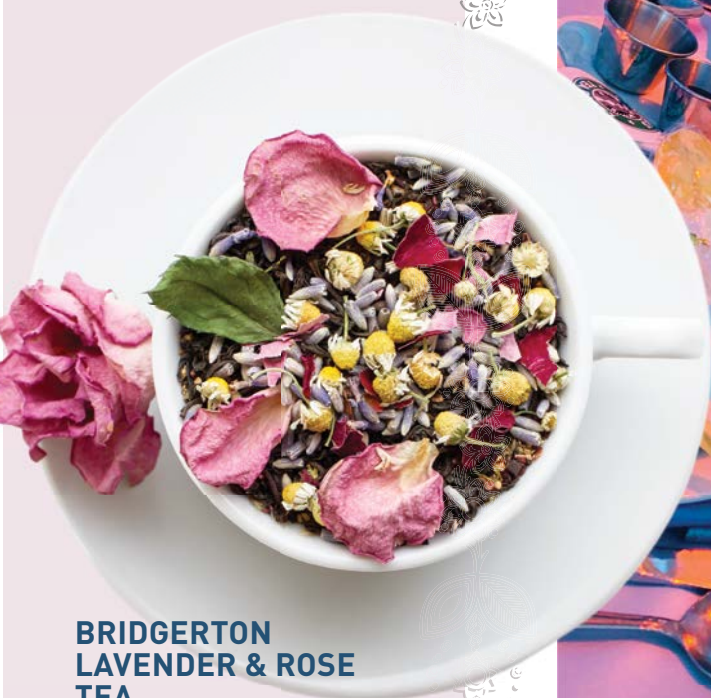
METHOD

1. Infuse loose Chamomile tea leaves in 4 oz of boiled water for 5 minutes.
2. Strain loose tea leaves, refrigerate to cool.
3. Combine 1 oz cooled chamomile with all other ingredients.
4. Shake over ice, and strain into a chilled cocktail glass.

TOP RIGHT: THE APNES TEA PUNCH COCKTAIL INCLUDES BOURBON, BRANDY, PEAR PUREE, BUTTERSCOTCH CORDIAL AND BLACK TEA.

Photo courtesy Cochon





BRIDGERTON LAVENDER & ROSE TEA

YIELD: 1

INGREDIENTS FOR LAVENDER SIMPLE SYRUP

- ½ cup water
- ½ cup white sugar
- 1 teaspoon fresh lavender

METHOD

1. Boil water, sugar, and lavender in a pot. Boil for about 8-10 minutes, until the water has reduced.
2. Remove from heat and let cool until thickened, about 15 minutes.

INGREDIENTS FOR ROSE TEA

- 2 black tea bags
- ½ tsp honey
- ½ tsp rose water

METHOD

1. Boil 2 cups water, honey, rose water with tea until dark, until stepped.

ASSEMBLY

1. Add one tablespoon of lavender syrup to the bottom of your glass. Layer with 1 cup of black tea, and top with milk.
2. Stir and drink immediately.



SAZ CATERING HOSTED A HIGH TEA FOR A BAT MITZVAH THAT INCLUDED AN ASSORTMENT OF TEA SANDWICHES (DEVILED EGG, SMOKED SALMON, AND CUCUMBER & CREAM CHEESE).

Photo courtesy Jaime Peterson

are tea, something savory and something sweet, but so many people have taken that tradition and put their own spin on it."

Making an event out of it

When executing a proper high tea, there's an element of romanticism and elegance that can't be denied. In fact, hotels, event planners and caterers are capitalizing on this draw by hosting specialized tea parties for birthdays, bridal or baby showers, anniversary celebrations, and in Jaime Peterson's case, Bat Mitzvahs.

"There's this element of fancy that is so fun, and so elegant," said Peterson, who is the Sales Team Manager for Saz's Catering in Milwaukee, Wisc. "We all got used to the big parties, the standard décor, but now you can have this intimate party and have it be really, really beautiful and simple."

Peterson recently put together a high tea menu for a client's Bat Mitzvah. The menu included individual tea pots for each guest with their choice of tea, an assortment of tea sandwiches (deviled egg, smoked salmon, and cucumber & cream cheese), grilled salmon over a Caesar salad, tomato soup, fruit kebabs, and bite-sized desserts (mini cannoli, macarons, mini cupcakes and mini scones).

Both Worthington and Peterson agree that high tea has the potential to be the next big event trend going forward because it's a perfect option for the small gatherings of the moment.

"People are desperate to spend time together," Worthington said. "and afternoon tea provides the perfect opportunity to that."

"There's something really special about afternoon tea because it's quite an unusual thing to do." **CS**

*
By Amber Kispert

Trading in Big, Beautiful Galas for Intimate, Virtual Storytelling

Nonprofits embracing the idea of a virtual gala as a way to maintain donors



THE PACKAGING THAT A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING GALA BOX COMES IN CAN BE JUST AS IMPORTANT AS THE ITEMS INSIDE. *Photo courtesy vibrant table catering & Events*

“Donors don’t like the idea of sitting and watching a screen,” said Jen Poyer, a Los Angeles-based event planner who works closely with nonprofits. “The question becomes, how do we create these interactive experiences that will keep somebody engaged?”

Finding the right solution to support nonprofits as they struggle to maintain their fundraising efforts may seem daunting from the outside, but it often distills down to two simple elements: storytelling and engagement.

“You need to look at galas differently because they can’t really be recreated the same way virtually,” said

Nonprofits rely on their annual galas to raise donations that help keep them fiscally viable in the years to follow. But as large gatherings remain unattainable, how can this be accomplished? Bringing fundraising galas into the virtual realm has proven challenging being these events rely so heavily on the human element. Auctions, high plate tickets, facility tours: all part of the in-person experience.



VIBRANT TABLE CATERING & EVENTS PREPARED A FRUIT AND CHEESE BOX FOR A RECENT FUNDRAISING GALA. *Photo courtesy Vibrant Table Catering & Events*



THE PINK AID VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING GALA TOOK PLACE EARLIER THIS SUMMER. *Photo courtesy Jeffrey Selden*

Samantha Swaim of Swaim Strategies out of Portland, OR. “When you try to fake like there is a crowd, it feels inappropriate, dishonest, and there is this weird disconnect. It needs to be more intimate: less about the stuff and more about how the story is told.”

The power of storytelling

Whether you are hosting a fundraising event in-person or virtually, the nonprofit’s mission must always be the focus, and sharing that story becomes so much more important when conveyed in a virtual world.

“You always have to think about that personal connection,” Poyer said, “especially when you’re in that fundraising capacity.”

And do not forget about potential donors that nonprofits may be connecting with for the first time.

“But that’s the good news; it opens them up to people and a reach far beyond their local fundraising. It no longer matters where you live—you can participate and enjoy the fun that surrounds these virtual experiences,” Jeffrey Selden from Marcia Selden Catering & Events said. “Virtual events will attract interest and



THE BOXES THAT MARCIA SELDEN CATERING & EVENTS PREPARED FOR THE PINK AID VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING GALA INCLUDED TRUFFLE POPCORN, A COCKTAIL KIT, THAI SHRIMP CHIPS, HAND-CUT POTATO CHIPS, CANDY LIPS, PINK AID COOKIES, CHOCOLATE COVERED PRETZELS AND FRENCH MACARONS. *Photo courtesy Jeffrey Selden*

fundraising from people all over the world whom they may never have had the opportunity to connect with.”

When thinking about the best way to tell a nonprofit’s story, Swaim suggests that you do not have to look any further than some of your favorite television shows, whether that is a “couch talk” style interview show, a news broadcast, or even a game show.

“It needs to be intimate and much more like a television experience,” she said. “Rather than thinking of the theme of your party and trying to recreate your party, replicate a TV show that you like.”

In addition to the program itself, a nonprofit’s story can also be told through giveaways, which is why partnerships with caterers become so important.

“These fundraisers are critical for the success of their foundations, so

many of these nonprofits are looking for options and ideas to help move forward and keep their messaging and fundraising efforts alive,” Selden said. “And by partnering with caterers they can come up with customized options in order to move forward without having to give up on their galas.”

The “secret sauce”

The best way to ensure that donors “attend” a virtual fundraising gala is to make it more interactive and engaging than just a video presentation. These donors and sponsors want to see value in their attendance, and they want to know that their contributions are appreciated.

One of the most surefire ways to convey that appreciation, Poyer and Swaim agree, is to deliver specialized gift boxes to attendees and past donors. Poyer suggests



NONPROFITS HAVE TURNED TO CATERERS AND EVENT PLANNERS TO BRAINSTORM HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY BRING THEIR FUNDRAISING GALAS VIRTUAL. *Photo courtesy the AV Department*



FOR A VIRTUAL FUNDRAISING GALA, IT'S IMPORTANT TO FIND THE RIGHT WAY TO TELL THE ORGANIZATION'S STORY, WHETHER IT'S A "COUCH TALK," NEWSCAST, GAMESHOW OR VIDEO REEL. *Photo courtesy Swaim Strategies*

having tiered price points for those interested in attending the virtual gala. For example, a gift box might be provided to those who have donated prior to the start of the event, but not to someone who may only be a prospect. Of course, any prospect who donates during or after the event should be acknowledged in some way.

In summer 2020, Marcia Selden Catering & Events delivered 600 boxes for Pink Aid's fundraising gala, which was celebrating its 10-year anniversary. Pink Aid provides emergency financial assistance for breast cancer patients in need.

"Reaching out to donors with small touchpoints every four to six months keeps fundraising efforts alive,"

Selden said. "You need to be able to think 'inside the box' and create offerings beyond in-person events. Our nonprofit clients have been excited about the many different options that we offer with regard to keeping their galas relevant, safely planned, exciting, and unique, all while continuing their push for raising funds and offering an amazing guest experience."

When thinking about what items to include in the boxes, Kurt Beadell, Creative Director for Vibrant Table Catering & Events in Portland, OR, suggests incorporating limited menus that are delicious, fast, and easy to package, transfer, and prepare. "The meals are a treat and a delight to our

guests and they are delicious and easy to prepare for as well."

Swaim suggests including a kids menu option since so many families are quarantining at home. She also suggests options for those with dietary restrictions.

In addition to a meal, Swaim and Poyer also recommend that the delivered boxes should include information about the nonprofit, event instructions, and other branded items to reinforce the nonprofit's mission.

"The secret sauce is to get the event on their calendar," Swaim said.

Another way to engage donors? Offer the option of donating in real time through text or a donation app which will then be shown in a donation tracking thermometer or grid during the virtual gala, Swaim said. Another example, for an upcoming event that Poyer is working on, is to have attendees be able to request a song by making a minimum real time donation.

Virtual fundraising galas may be here to stay in some capacity or another, so reach out to the nonprofits in your area today to see how you can help.

"It's not going to be one day that we flip the switch and we go back to meeting in person," Poyer said.

"Wherever our donors are, we may not all be in the same place, but we are all still together." 

Embracing Online Ordering

How can online ordering help transform a catering business? In a recent International Caterers Association (ICA) webinar, caterers discussed how online meal ordering has helped them weather the pandemic and how it can be an important part of revitalization plans moving forward.



TOP: A SHINDIG BY SCHAFFER CHARCUTERIE BOX. *Photo courtesy Schaffer*

RIGHT: WHEN INCORPORATING ONLINE ORDERING, IT'S IMPORTANT TO ALLOW FOR MULTIPLE MENU CHOICES. *Photo courtesy 12th Street Catering*



Why embrace online ordering?

In 2020, COVID-19 prompted a 25% increase in food delivery (sevenrooms.com/en/blog/41-interesting-food-delivery-statistics) via ordering apps, with 60% of U.S. consumers ordering delivery or takeout at least weekly and over 30% ordering more than once a week (Source: eMarketer.) It is a lucrative market (a million-dollar industry, to be exact) that could help caterers get back on their feet and grow their businesses as our industry continues to weather the road to recovery. In fact, some caterers have leveraged this for their corporate clients as well, leading to an even greater impact on the bottom line.

Doing things out of the ordinary can seem uncomfortable. But it is those companies that try new things and take risks that will see the return! Those caterers who decided to implement online ordering capabilities for their company have reaped the rewards, and their testimonials speak for themselves.

Abbey Duke, Sugarsnap Catering, noted that if her team did not adopt online ordering, they would have lost sales to big chains like Panera, who make online catering orders easy for businesses, sports teams, families, etc.

Similarly, Jim Lenz, Two Unique Catering, noted that during the pandemic, staffing became a major issue. He shared that he was so short on time trying to wear all his different hats, that allowing customers to order online made it faster, easier, and more convenient for all parties.

These scenarios are sure to sound familiar to many catering businesses who are navigating this unique time!

What to consider

Now, if online ordering is something you may want to explore, there are elements you must consider for success. The following are the top four considerations.

Cost. Obviously, cost is a big consideration when implementing anything new, but especially now with business merely trickling in. Ask about monthly fees, setup costs, whether there is a contract where you are financially obligated for a specific duration of time, and how time-intensive and hands-on the online ordering setup will be. Remember that time is money as well!

Ease of use. As with any new system, you want to make sure it is easy to use for both you and (especially) your customer! Is it mobile-friendly? Is it easy to understand? Is the process self-explanatory? Can you edit your offerings by yourself without spending hours figuring it out daily?

Customization features. No caterer offers the same menu, so your online ordering system must be easily customizable! You want to

ensure you can add features like food descriptions and images, calorie counts, dietary information, pickup and delivery fees, hours, minimums—all the things you would have on a standard catering menu or contract!

Software integration. This is a big one that many caterers do not consider. You want your online ordering system to be able to integrate with your current sales and operations software tools. The last thing you want to do is add more manual tasks in order to streamline. There is simply too much room for error when your systems do not talk to each other!

If you are in search of a way to gain more revenue and streamline business operations without heavy staffing requirements, an online ordering partner could be your perfect solution! **CS**



BOTH HOT AND COLD OPTIONS SHOULD BE INCLUDED ON YOUR ONLINE ORDERING MENU, BASED ON WHAT WILL TRAVEL BEST. Photo courtesy 12th Street Catering

SugarSnap Catering and Two Unique Catering are proud members of the ICA. For more information, visit internationalcaterers.org.



STEAL THIS

Fresh ideas to use or adapt at your next event.

► Boozy Cupcakes | Catering by Michaels

Photo courtesy John Caruso



◄ Ice Cream Sandwiches | Lisa Dupar Catering

Photo courtesy Brooke Fitts



Strawberry Rhubarb Crumble Parfait | Tuxedos and Tennis Shoes Catering & Events

Photo courtesy NXT Creates



Have Your Cake for "Breakfast" | Color Pop Events

Photo courtesy Jessica Hunt Photography

WHAT A SWEET IDEA

With wedding season fast approaching, couples will be beginning their search for a dessert that reflects their relationship. While tiered cakes have always been the tried-and-true favorite, more couples are opting for non-traditional wedding desserts, especially during COVID-19 when individual items continue to be all the rage. Get inspired by these delectable desserts that go beyond the cake. —Amber Kispert



Hand Dipped Ice Cream | Above All Catering

Photo courtesy Above All Catering



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MIAMI BEACH



By Chef Robin Selden



Editor's note: One of the iconic images you will see whenever you encounter the **Marcia Selden Catering & Events** brand is a pair of red lips, poised for a smooch. Robin explained that her grandmother was Miss Cuba 1938 and a Palmolive girl, who danced in several of the Ziegfield Follies shows. "She was the image of a '40s beauty queen," Robin said. "She always had her red or hot pink lipstick on, and it really became a thing for us, initially started as my mom's [Marcia's] obsession." Today you will find this family-owned business touting signature lip candies, cookies, stickers, coasters, and even masks, all in homage to a beautiful person who could captivate an audience with a single glance.



Thinking Inside a Box

Who on earth would think that we would ever, as luxury, restaurant-style caterers, be psyched about creating interesting and exciting food boxes? If you told me we'd be doing this a year ago—as we were deeply immersed in our most successful year in our 40 years of business—I would have told you that you were out of your mind! But in 2020, we literally had to stop catering as we knew it and begin to specialize in socially distanced, safely served and serviced catering.

Many of our incredible corporate and nonprofit clients embraced our parties in a box concept, and we have been doing events this way now for hundreds of people at a time, even shipping the boxes nationally (look out Harry & David!).

We see that people still need to celebrate life's moments: it is our job to help them during these challenging times. In addition to parties in a box we assembled "Polo Picnics" in a box to sell at the Greenwich Polo matches. Boxes for our boating clients were called "Marcia's Maritime" and for our jetsetters with private planes we offered "Marcia's Medallion Club." We designed really cool branding and packaging to elevate the experience for all the variations, which set us apart from anything else that they could get locally. We also created a loyalty program for each of these, encouraging repeat business and giving them an opportunity to receive discounts based on their orders. Listen, regardless of how

wealthy someone is, when you put an incentive program in front of them, they bite! It is soft sales and it makes it easy for our sales team to get the repeat business.

As caterers, we create memories and evoke joy through an experience that tastes really great! Our clients currently want home cooked meals that show up to their doorsteps (contact free in most cases). They don't care about the garnish or what micro green sits on top. They appreciate seasonal, locally sourced, and fresh ingredients that are cooked really well. Our dishes highlight the ingredients—no over seasoning or saucing...very Tuscan in feel with EVOO, lemon, garlic, sea salt, and fresh pepper. All they have to do is to warm them when they are ready to eat. They show up as pre-packaged meals and we have been told that many of our customers eat them right out of the containers...talk about less fuss!

In addition to the custom catered experiences we are known for, I'm most excited about our newest concept called "Dinner-Parties." Specifically, we will provide a turn-key "Dinner-Party" complete with unique and curated menus, custom printed menu cards, tabletop rentals that are designed based on the menu theme, florals to complement the tabletop, awesome wines, and specialty crafted cocktails. Our thought was to take the stress and the work out of entertaining and to provide our clients with everything they needed to host a perfect dinner party at home.

It comes down to the experience. If you make something memorable and delicious, people will never forget that. And, when we are on the other side of this pandemic, they will hire you again to create their in-person celebrations. 

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EXCLUSIVE: Mouthwatering Menu Trends for 2021

Tech Trends: Virtual, hybrid, and touchless will all be popular

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SPRING 2021

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Trends
of 2021

FUN AND
CREATIVE WAYS
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P. 34

FIGHTING
ZOOM FATIGUE
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ENTERTAINMENT
P. 37



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Say "I Do" to Photoshoots

Who doesn't love a good photoshoot? The perfect setting for an engagement photoshoot may not always be within range, so take matters into your own hands and design one perfectly suited for the enamoured couple. More importantly, let's talk selfie stations. Break away from the mold and design a uniquely luxe setting for all to enjoy.

The Main Event

Love may be the star of the day (or night), but a jaw-dropping setting is sure to keep guests talking long after the sealing kiss. No matter whether the wedding is taking place in a backyard or at an established venue, what you add to the mix sets the tone for the experience. Frame the wedding party in dramatic flair with CORT Events drape, or go minimal in furnishings to showcase the venue's existing elements.

Time To Party!

Weddings are bound to look a tad different in the future, with many opting for smaller guest lists even after restrictions are lifted. Buffets and passed finger foods will likely be a thing of the past, and reception seating will be more generously spaced out. For bar service, provide bar-top plexiglass dividers with a serving slot and create enough stations to keep lines short. Incorporate beautiful soft seating and bar table options to create lounge spaces when those dancing feet need to rest.



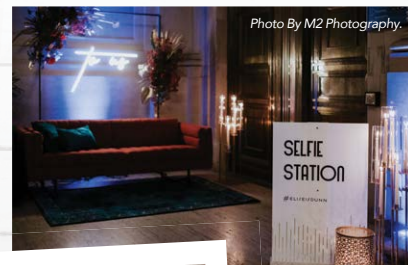
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From the proposal, to engagement party, onto the bridal shower, then finally - the big day! Whether you're planning a micro wedding or a grand affair, celebrate your love in style every step of the way.



SPRING 2021 THIS ISSUE



18 THE STATE OF WEDDINGS in 2021 & Beyond

Kylie Carlson of The Wedding Academy gives a rundown of what to expect during wedding season this year, including a focus on diversity, the “pintimate” wedding, and incorporating technology into the big day.

31 Trends in Tech: It's All Virtual

Technology will remain a high priority in 2021, here's what you need to know.



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Scott Rabe weighs in on Structured Assembly

On the cover: Gretchen Culver from Rocket Science Events incorporated Pantone's 2021 Colors of the Year, Ultimate Grey and Illuminating Yellow, during a recent styled shoot. Photo courtesy Jeremie Barlow Photography

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Bite-sized entertainment breaks offer a solution to Zoom fatigue



EDITOR'S PAGE

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY

Year markers are a time for reflection. For those wonderful moments that life offers, we also tend to celebrate with flowers, splendid meals, gifts, fireworks, music, dancing, and embraces. I really don't know what to say about the full year we have experienced, our journey through a pandemic. I don't feel like celebrating, though it does seem like...shouldn't we? Because that's what we do, what we promote, what we want. We want the celebrations to return, and we want to be the ones orchestrating them.

This wedding issue fills me with such hope for the months to come. I know every state has its own set of rules for reopening, but we all see it... events are returning. It's nothing like it was a year ago, when everything was shutting down entirely. Slowly, surely, we are seeing a reboot—and here we are in what used to be “wedding season.” As we look toward the rest of 2021 and into 2022...I think every week is going to be wedding season.

So, turn to page 18 and gain some inspiration from Kylie Carlson of The Wedding Academy about the trends she is expecting to see pop in 2021. Learn about the glorious and delicious food trends you can feature when guests ask for tastings (turn to page 26); explore how to employ clever décor, props, and more into your methods of physical distancing on page 34. Finally, turn to page 08 for information on The Special Event, held July 19 to 22 in Miami Beach, Florida—LIVE. Yes, we are doing it. We are not cancelling; we are not intimidated. We are going to gather together, learn, talk, network—and celebrate with flowers and food and music and dancing...and golly I hope a few embraces too—well, at least an elbow bump. And we'll keep you all safe as per our Informa AllSecure (informa.com/about-us/allsecure) standards.

So, Happy Anniversary. We made it a full year. We see the clouds thinning and the sun beginning to burn through. Very soon, maybe at The Special Event, we can lead you all in a chorus of *Happy Days Are Here Again*. It's my greatest wish for you all.

Cheers!

Kathleen

Kathleen Stoehr
Director of Community & Content Strategy

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Spring 2021 THIS ISSUE

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Marketing expert
Christie Osborne
reveals the myths behind
Google Analytics



The Wedding
Academy's
Kyle Carlson gives
the rundown on what's
in store for wedding
season in 2021



Island native **Scott
Rabe** discusses the
difference between
Social Gathering and
Structured Assembly

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605 Third Ave., 22nd Floor, New York, NY 10158 (informa.com). Canadian GST#R126431964.
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Editorial Office: 10231 Zenith Lane, Minneapolis, MN 55431
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The Special Event + Catersource
Winner of awards from the American Society of Business Publication Editors
and the Western Publications Association

Also publishers of *MeetingsNet* and *Catersource* magazines

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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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CONFERENCE NEWS

by Kathleen Stoehr

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TSE/CS 2021 details

THE SPECIAL EVENT UPDATE

Wondering how to navigate The Special Event Show's education sessions? What does the co-location with Catersource Conference & Tradeshow mean in regard to your education experience?

Want to know who you should see and when? We have details for you here, from start of day on Tuesday, July 20 to end of day on Thursday, July 22. Read on!

You have a choice, and it's a tempting one. Buy a TSE pass, buy a Catersource pass, or buy a combined pass. How do you decide? Let us break it down for you in the simplest way we can.

catersource® + THE SPECIAL EVENT®

JULY 19-22, 2021 | MIAMI BEACH

1. THE SPECIAL EVENT (TSE) EDUCATION PASS

The Special Event education pass will give you access to all sessions on The Special Event side of the conference area, plus access to the "Bridge" stage, which stands at about the midpoint of the conference area (more on that in a minute). It also includes premier sessions such as the Opening General Session on Wednesday morning, July 21, and Michael Cerbelli's The Hot List™: 2021 on Thursday, July 22.

Your pass also gives you access to the entirety of the tradeshow floor, including access to all exhibitors and sessions on the Catersource side of the tradeshow floor. Bigger experience, more to see: enough to keep you busy and engaged for three full days of conference and tradeshow!

2. CATERSOURCE EDUCATION PASS

A Catersource education pass works almost exactly like the TSE education pass does, just on the opposite side of the conference area. Enjoy access to all sessions on the Catersource side,



The Bridge stage, featuring speakers who have topics applicable to both the events and catering industries, is where you can meet up with attendees from Catersource, because it is open to everyone! (Left) **Dima Ghawi** will present an engaging session on Wednesday the 21st, “Beyond Picture Perfect Diversity: How to Create a Sense of Inclusion.” (Right) A favorite from Catersource will now be available to TSE audiences: **Anthony Lambatos** will kick off the conference with “Becoming the Leader You Want to Be.”

plus access to the “Bridge” stage, which stands at about the midpoint of the conference area. It also includes premier sessions such as the Opening General Session on Wednesday morning, July 21, and Michael Cerbelli’s The Hot List™: 2021 on Thursday, July 22.

This pass also allows access to the entirety of the tradeshow floor (including the TSE side), with access to all exhibitors and sessions in the same way the TSE pass does.

3. COMBINED OR ALL ACCESS EDUCATION PASS

Of course, you can’t attend everything—there are way too many sessions between the conference and tradeshow floor over three days. But, if you’re up for the challenge and want access to both conference programs—go for it! Buy a Combined or All Access pass and move between the two conferences like the star you are.

What are you doing to keep your attendees healthy and safe during the event?

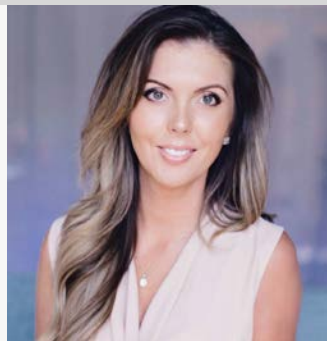
We want you all to know that we are keeping your health and safety at the conference top of mind. COVID restrictions are continually changing but we confer with the Miami Beach Convention Center often to ensure we are apprised of all initiatives. Additionally, our own Informa AllSecure measures are taken very seriously. As for the event space at the convention center—it’s huge. We can easily distance and still have a robust attendance.

If you want to review Informa AllSecure, go to www.informa.com/about-us/allsecure. You can also find it on our show websites. There are 10 initiatives, which include specifications surrounding cleaning and hygiene, physical distancing, and detection.



What is the Bridge stage that was referred to earlier?

The Bridge stage was first launched in 2020 to great success when the two conferences decided to co-locate. Educational content on the Bridge



Enjoy breakout sessions from hot speakers such as **Pawnta Shadab**; **Rob Barber**; and the team of **Kate Patay** and **Bobby Dutton**



Your Bridge stage experience continues with speakers like **Barbara Khozam** on relationships; **Taylor DeMartino** headlining an elaborate floral demo; **Shakira Brown** on diversity and inclusion; and two powerhouse sessions from **Christina Matteucci**.



There is a lot to learn about the newest in technology. Enjoy sessions presented by **Scott Frankel**; **Deborah Elias**; **Cara Kleinhaut**; and **Adonica Coleman**.



Also on the Bridge: "Cause for Celebration" with **Kristin Banta**, **David Merrell**, **Michael Stavros**, and moderator **Clint Upchurch**.

stage contains a wonderful mix of topics that we feel—no matter what industry you are in, you can benefit from the information provided. So, whether it's a discussion about diversity and inclusion; a session that teaches you how to embrace what is unique to only you; a stellar panel of industry greats offering trends and financial guidance post-COVID; or a colorful and inspiring demonstration on the latest floral trends—you will find it on the Bridge stage.

I really want to have no boundaries at this conference. Sounds like a Combined or All Access pass is the right one for me...but I also know there are going to be times when I want to be in two places at once. What are my options?

We do not restrict you from session hopping. If you find one is not right for you, or you want to vet two sessions in the same time slot, by all means, grab a seat near the back and move in and out of sessions at your leisure. This

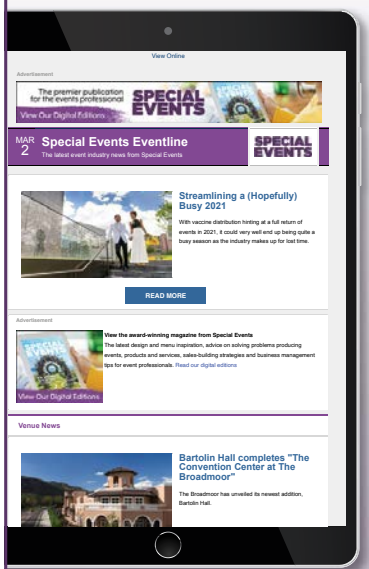
goes for whether you buy a combined pass or a singular conference pass (that is, hop from varied sessions within the same conference—we won't stop you!). Another option is to buy a separate audio recording package (which is also included as part of our All Access Pass). Most of our speakers will allow audio taping of their sessions, which will give you a means to experience anything you missed—or want to revisit—after the show is over.

What about all of the other sessions at the events? Where can I learn more about them?

Your best bet is to go to schedule.thespecialeventshow.com and breeze through the many confirmed sessions. You can log in and begin building a schedule of your “must attend” choices—which may also help you decide which pass you want to buy. Both The Special Event and Catersource sessions are on the site. Sort by pass, sort by conference, or look at the entirety. ●

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CONFETTI



A New *Twist* on In-Person Events

Hosting in-person events is what drives Seth Dolan and Eric Faamausili of Los Angeles' Gladiator Productions (gladiatorproductions.com). Given that California is still not allowing any type of gathering, no matter the size, the pair find it has been disheartening.

"We really love IRL (In Real Life) events, so not having events has made us anxious," Dolan said, "which is why we decided to find ways to bring

people together by stepping outside the box."

In January, Gladiator Productions helped produce an interactive and in-person event for the launch of Ole Henriksen's new Lemonade Smoothing Scrub that transformed a vintage ice cream truck into a mobile event destination experience. "It was a refreshing start to the new year," Faamausili said.

"We made it an event, but it wasn't an event," Dolan joked.

By Amber Kispert

ALL PHOTOS COURTESY MATT PETIT PHOTOGRAPHY

Events

delivered to your door

For the launch, Dolan and Faamausili retrofitted a circa 1974 ice cream truck, which then made scheduled stops to Ole Henriksen's VIP guests' homes where they were treated to a selection of custom cocktails, a lemon vegan sorbet, and a gift box which included Ole Henriksen lemonade drinking glasses, matching sweatshirt and sweatpants, and a full-sized bottle of Lemonade Smoothing Scrub.

"We knew we had to have fun with these ingredients," Dolan said, "and the experience needed to embody the product. Using an ice cream truck just felt like something cheeky and fun. I mean, we basically celebrated summer in the middle of winter."

For Dolan, the highlight of the event was being able to see people in-person again.



"We pulled up and it was an immediate party," he said. "You could see the joy on their faces because none of us had seen anyone in weeks. The stress of the past few months melted away."

Gladiator Productions retrofitted a circa 1974 ice cream truck for the event.

"We pulled up and it was an immediate party. You could see the joy on their faces because none of us had seen anyone in weeks. The stress of the past few months melted away."

— Seth Dolan, Gladiator Productions



All guests were required to wear face masks as they approached the truck.

Keep it fresh

Given California's strict guidelines on events, Gladiator Productions did their due diligence to ensure they were operating safely and legally.

In terms of California guidelines, since they weren't having people gather at an event, the Ole Henriksen launch fell under delivery service guidelines, and since many of the stops would be used on social media they also fell within brand marketing and filming guidelines.



Gladiator Productions staff donned Ole Henriksen branded face masks during the event.

“We were able to produce something in a completely COVID-proof way,” Dolan said.

Since safety was the first priority, advance testing was completed for all crew members working the event as well as daily check-in and temperature screenings that took place every morning. During the event, social distancing was maintained and all staff wore full event-branded PPE at all times. Guests were also required to wear face masks and provided branded Lemonade Smoothing Scrub face masks. Both Dolan and Faamausili are also COVID-19 Safety Compliance Certified On-Set Coordinators and are able to quickly identify and negate any potential risks.

Since the Ole Henriksen event, Gladiator Productions has been approached by so many other people who want to produce something similar.

“This was a great jumping off point for us,” Faamausili said. “We’re always going to try and keep the fun while always breaking the mold.”

Dolan agrees. “Instead of thinking about an event you once did, do something completely new and different,” he said. “If outdoors is the best place to play, how do you make it fun, interesting and exciting? How do you bring people together in creative and unique ways?” ●



The gift boxes distributed to guests included Ole Henriksen lemonade drinking glasses, matching sweatshirt and sweatpants, and a full-sized bottle of Lemonade Smoothing Scrub.



A single household shares a toast during the event.



The menu featured during the Ole Henriksen event incorporated many of the ingredients found in the Lemonade Smoothing Scrub.

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The State of Weddings in

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Events





h 2021 & *E Beyond*

BY KYLIE
CARLSON

While the wedding industry collectively navigated the ups and downs of 2020, we're still carrying many of the repercussions into the new year. As a result, the landscape of 2021 will look unlike any year we've seen in the past. From the turmoil of 2020 to the road to recovery that lies ahead, we expect to see the wedding industry transform in new and unprecedented ways, pushing event pros to adapt their businesses in order to meet market expectations.

As we make our way through the first quarter of the year, consider these industry trends and how they will influence how you do business and engage with clients in 2021.

“BY NOW, WE KNOW THAT THE DEMAND FOR JUSTICE IS LONG-LASTING. NOT ONLY SHOULD WEDDING BUSINESSES ANTICIPATE OPEN DIALOGUE ABOUT REPRESENTATION IN PHOTOGRAPHY, SOCIAL MEDIA, AND WEB CONTENT, BUT THEY SHOULD INITIATE IT, TOO.”

—Kunbi Odubogun, founder of *Perfête*

A SHIFT IN WEDDING MEDIA

In 2020, wedding media was notably dry. Content was at an all-time low because weddings were being postponed across the world. As a result, editors have had to adjust their expectations and pivot their media to serve readers what they genuinely want: real, actionable advice about planning a wedding during a global pandemic.

Heading into 2021, we will certainly see more real weddings on the scene; but the focus will look remarkably different from the big-and-bold themes of pre-COVID days. Sanya Percic, editor of *Ellwed*, explains: “Wedding media is already re-assessing what is important. There is more attention focused upon the real love story, rather than the big, luxury décor. The size and the ‘bling’ of the event are not the priority at this point.”

Percic continues: “Because of this pandemic, many weddings had to be postponed or sized down. This means that there were less weddings in 2020 than usual. There were also less styled shoots that could happen because of the restrictions and the lack of finances to invest in these shoots. That is why some wedding media will be more likely to accept smaller weddings and non-exclusive content. Some might also reassess older submissions which might have been rejected in the past. The way I see it, at this point, true love stories and family matter more than anything else!”

For wedding pros, this means that you will have more opportunities to submit those events that may not have felt like editorial gold a couple of years ago. Nowadays, a beautiful story and

some special details are all it takes to spur inspiration.

A FOCUS ON TECH

With social distancing measures and group size mandates aplenty, everyone turned to technology for human interaction. From virtual birthday parties to video brunches, we saw all social gatherings go digital—weddings included. Even with a vaccine, many people will continue to be hyper-vigilant about health and safety and, as a result, virtual weddings are not yet outdated.

Susan Moeller, Marketing and Partnerships Manager for Tailwind elaborates: “Post-COVID, technology and social media are the event for many of the couple’s loved ones. Their only experience of the ceremony will be delivered via technology, making social media a primary part of the wedding day. As with all that is central to a wedding, social media and tech services belong in wedding planners’ portfolios this year.”

Wedding professionals can lean into this tech-driven trend by incorporating virtual services into their packages, whether that means setting up a Zoom meeting for 50 people, creating branded social media campaigns for couples, or livestreaming weddings via YouTube Live.

Couples will be opting for more elaborate floral arrangements in 2021. Photos courtesy Jeremie Barlow Photography for Gretchen Culver, Rocket Science Events





The Micro Wedding trend, which grew out of the COVID-19 pandemic, will continue be popular in 2021, however look for them to evolve into a "pintimate wedding" with a focus on guest experience. Photo courtesy Dani Louise Photography

The State of Weddings in 2021 & Beyond

A RECKONING WITH DIVERSITY

The pandemic was not the only event to impact the world in 2020. A fight for social justice saw Black Lives Matter movements launch once more in countries across the globe, creating urgency in the discussion about equality. Going forward, businesses will need to be intentional and genuine with their commitment to diversity and how they present their brand to the market.

“By now, we know that the demand for justice is long-lasting,” states Kunbi Odubogun, founder of Perfête. “Not only should wedding businesses anticipate open dialogue about representation in photography, social media, and web content, but they should initiate it, too.”

Odubogun adds: “Continual assessments of diverse representation in digital assets is essential, and engaging feedback from employees and customers is indispensable. Trends show that companies who ask for feedback from their employees, readers, vendors, and direct customers are more likely to be better represented by multiple ethnicities, races, religions, and sexual orientations.”

These shifts in the industry’s foundation will grow as we make our way through 2021 but expect to see other trends arise as the world grapples with recovery from one of the toughest years on record in modern history.

Some other trends to keep an eye on the lookout for include:

‘PINTIMATE’ WEDDING

One of the top trends on the horizon is being termed the “pintimate wedding”—a personalized and intimate micro wedding. The pintimate wedding was born out of the many pandemic restrictions that have been placed on couples around the world. Some are choosing to postpone, but some are moving forward, opting for a more relaxed affair with a guest list of 30 or under. These weddings tend to be a fusion of formal and informal with a more expansive ‘per





head' budget than was available with a larger guest list.

With the intimate wedding, the focus will be on guest experience. Real thought is being put into the guest's journey as part of the wedding and often includes gastronomic delights with seven course meals, beautiful table décor, and attention to many smaller details with complete personalization.

SEQUEL WEDDINGS

Also on the horizon is the sequel wedding, which in essence means, "wed now, party later." Naturally, this trend has been a direct result of the pandemic, but it certainly gives a couple the best of both worlds, an intimate, micro wedding

ceremony followed by the large party in the future.

RETURNING TO THEIR ROOTS

Weddings have been ready for a big change for some time now, and even before the pandemic, a shift was on the rise. More couples were eliminating big guest numbers, over the top luxury, and the "more is more" mentality. They were slowly but surely beginning to place more importance on guest experience and the meaning of "wedding." They were opting for intimacy and privacy. Weddings are returning to their roots.

Couples are playing out their love stories in a more intimate and personal setting. They're embracing the meaning of marriage and celebrating with those who are important to them.

This is not a year for skating by on assumptions; instead, every wedding professional will have to be attentive to industry trends and prepared to adapt to changes in the market to remain sustainable and profitable in 2021. Weddings are changing and adapting to a brand-new world and the industry is simply reinventing itself. Just like a Phoenix, the industry will rise strong once again. ●

Kylie Carlson is the owner of *The Wedding Academy*, a globally-known education organization for industry professionals. She's also the founder of *Wedding CEO Club* and the *Wedding CEO Podcast*. For more trends and information on the business of weddings, download your copy of the *International Wedding Trend Report* (weddingacademyglobal.com/trend-report).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: 2021 will see movement away from the big and bold blingy events happening pre-pandemic. Photo courtesy The Seitter Woodhouse

Stationary and event branding will be big in 2020. Photo courtesy Sarahi Hadden Photography for Jordan Kentris, A Good Day

Trends show that companies who ask for feedback regarding diversity from the wider community, as well as internally, are more likely to be hired by a wider and more diverse group of individuals. Photo courtesy Blanche Gallery

Weddings will be returning to their roots, by focusing more on the marriage, and less about luxury. Photo courtesy Colette Marie Photography for Ash Best Events



Planning Your Advertising Approach with COVID-19 in Mind



We have more time on our hands than ever before—use it to ramp up your blog or start a YouTube channel to answer your audience's burning questions. By the time business picks back up, you'll be the most loved and trusted brand in your market!

By Christie Osborne

Every year ushers in new changes to the advertising landscape, but 2021 will surely look more different than any other year. Thanks to a global pandemic, Black Lives Matter activism, and a notably divisive election, the digital space has had to adapt to the evolving needs of a market that has spent more time online than ever before.

On one hand, many content consumers took the plunge and became content creators during the extended stay-at-home orders. With people quarantining at home, they naturally turned to the internet to connect with others. Out of that need, we saw new TikTok storytellers, comedians, and activists, as well as viral dances and sounds. Podcast shows took off, with dozens popping up every day—the competition for people's attention has certainly gotten tighter.

On the other hand, the volatility surrounding the 2020 election led to confusion over the difference between fake news and legitimate journalism. As a result, social media companies have been forced to rethink their role in content distribution while protecting both freedom of speech and the integrity of the media. Not a small feat.

The changes ushered in by 2020 go well beyond standard typical algorithm changes and newsfeed saturation. There has been a significant cultural paradigm shift, both online and off. Keep these key considerations in mind as you map out your ad strategy for 2021.

PREPARE FOR TOUGHER COMPETITION THAN EVER IN THE NEWS FEEDS.

When COVID-19 first struck, ad placements became surprisingly cheap for a few months. People were concerned about the future of the economy and kept their pennies close. However, ad rates go up every election year because you are essentially competing with campaigning politicians for digital space. We saw this happen, as well as an increase of business owners pivoting to virtual consulting and coaching services and competing for more online space.

As a result, ad rates went up as the year went on and people grew comfortable with their quarantine habits. This trend is expected to continue on a national level, but you might see ad space free up locally as people leave the industry. In 2021, measure everything and pay attention because you may see ad rates go up and down all year as the market fluctuates.

TAKE A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO VIDEO.

Video content is the cornerstone of the modern marketing strategy, so if you're not producing videos, it's time to get on board. If you already are onboard, it's worth noting that 2020 has seemingly swayed video marketing away from the stuffy, overproduced content reminiscent of a salesy TV commercial. Instead, the rise of TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram Reels has opened the gate for video content that feels more casual and authentic.

But, make no mistake: it's still well put together, but there's less of an emphasis on "perfect" in an effort to remain relatable. Skip the business professional attire and pull on a cute sweater with some leggings. Give your viewers a real look at the face behind the brand, while still providing the invaluable resources they need.

Following these organic trends, video typically outperforms still photos and carousels in ads. To win bids in the auction and get your ad costs down, make sure you're producing and testing video.

FOCUS ON INSTAGRAM.

If you only advertise on one social platform, let it be Instagram. Any time a social media app introduces something



new and exciting, they adjust their algorithms to favor that content. This year and next, that hot new feature is Instagram Reels—Instagram's take on the TikTok craze. Anyone who can master Reels now will succeed on Instagram in the foreseeable future, so start planning to create short bite-sized video content and put your ad spend there.

KEEP AN EYE ON THE GROWTH OF YOUTUBE LIVE.

This year, YouTube has really been pushing its Live feature, which straddles

the line between social media and a search engine. Throughout the pandemic, we were regularly receiving updates from health and government officials, many of which came by way of YouTube Live.

We're now seeing consumers becoming more comfortable getting their news from YouTube Live and this trend will only grow from here. Additionally, as people adjusted to stay-at-home orders, they turned to YouTube for everything from making sourdough starters and DIY haircuts to how-to guides for fixing appliances at home. As a result, more consumers have been driven to YouTube than ever before and, in 2021, smart marketers will capitalize on this trend.

Currently, it's not yet flooded with content creators, so it'll be a great place to invest your resources in the long run. Not to mention, the SEO benefits that come from YouTube are unparalleled compared to every other social media platform. It will be a slower burn than other outlets, but it will become increasingly important so take advantage and get ahead of the curve.

DON'T LOSE SIGHT OF ORGANIC CONTENT.

With the changes to social media algorithms, we're seeing the most successful brands combine organic and paid content for a powerful one-two punch. As more people create content and look to monetize, competition will be tight—however, social media companies are now looking to lift up brands that excel on both sides of the coin. Be sure to split up your efforts between organic and paid content to ensure that you're hitting the mark from both ends, putting you in the best position to appeal to the algorithms.

BE MINDFUL OF LARGER MARKET CONDITIONS.

If 2020 has taught us anything, it's that successful business owners pay attention and adjust to the ebbs and flows of the

market. There is no "set-it-and-forget-it" tactic that will last forever. Nor is there a strategy of outsourcing your messaging with the hopes that someone else will figure it out. It's up to you, the business owner, to take control of your marketing messages.

Routinely perform some simple market research to keep your finger on the pulse of your target audience, including where they are hanging out and any shifts in communication style you notice. You can also survey your clients that have postponed and ask them about their experience.

Armed with that knowledge, you can begin generating content that you know hits the mark with your ideal client. We have more time on our hands than ever before—use it to ramp up your blog or start a YouTube channel to answer your audience's burning questions. Once you do, you can begin setting dollar-a-day ads that drive traffic to your website, build audiences, and retarget visitors at a later time. By the time business picks back up, you'll be the most loved and trusted brand in your market!

In 2021, smart creatives will be intentional about monitoring *everything* to ensure their marketing approach is both effective and profitable. Gone are the days of throwing spaghetti against the wall and hoping it will stick. Profit margins will be tight and there isn't money to waste, so it's vital to be strategic in your marketing and advertising plans. Track your successes and failures, monitor ad rates, and keep adjusting your tactics until you're satisfied with the results. ●

Christie Osborne is the owner of Mountainside Media, a company that helps event industry professionals and brands develop scalable marketing strategies that bring in more inquiries and leads. Christie is a national educator with an upcoming speaking engagement at The Special Event + Catersource 2021.

●●●
FOOD FOR FÊTES

Mouthwatering Menu Trends for the *New Year*

by **Amber Kispert**

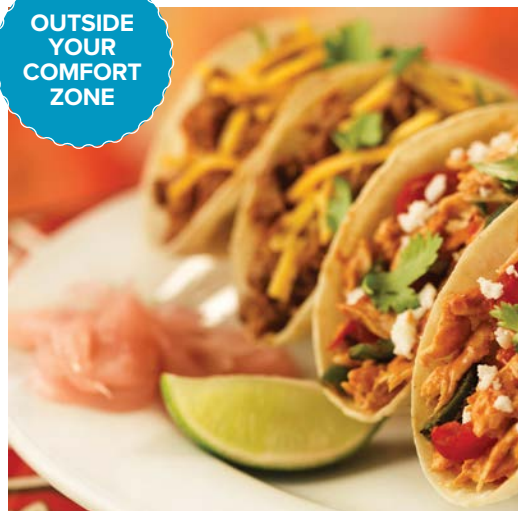
DONUT WALLS. ACTION stations. Build-your-own bars. Going into 2020, these trends were considered red hot. Then the pandemic hit and we watched them all get tossed aside in favor of to-go family meals and meal kits. As we look ahead to 2021, the effects of COVID-19 have infiltrated many of the food and beverage trends that are on the horizon, but they are exciting, creative, and, obviously, delicious just the same.

2021 is looking to bring diversity by utilizing non-traditional ingredients while ensuring the health and happiness of customers. What's on the menu? Take a look at these hot trends.

While traditional comfort food will undoubtedly still be popular as a way of coping with the pandemic, consumers will also be looking for healthier, more nostalgic dishes that transport them back to simpler times. Also look for non-traditional comfort food to rise in popularity, such as ramen dishes, pho, and tacos.

"Traditional comfort food is dead in the water," said California-based Chef Keith Lord during an International Caterers Association executive chef roundtable last year. "They're looking for comforting food that they haven't been able to make at home."

**OUTSIDE
YOUR
COMFORT
ZONE**



NON-TRADITIONAL COMFORT FOOD, SUCH AS TACOS, WILL BE A MENU IN 2021. PHOTO COURTESY JIM SCHERER FOR



BARS WILL BE SERVING UP HIGH-OCTANE COCKTAILS IN 2021. PHOTO COURTESY FEASTIVITIES EVENTS

HIGH FLYING COCKTAILS

Taking a page from the Roaring 1920s, and the years of bathtub gin and speakeasy culture, high-octane cocktails are making a comeback on bar menus across the country.

While beverage pros speculate that the rise in popularity for 100 proof and

higher could be backlash from the “sober curious” movement, others believe the swing is in response to the pandemic and consumers’ desires for a much-needed indulgence, while getting the most for their money by making every drink count.



Avocado toast has been all the rage in

recent years; and 2021 will see new toast trends pop up as well, everything from mushroom to sweet potato, and even open-faced comfort

WE WILL TOAST TO THAT

options like the Hot Brown.

Maybe this tasty trend was born of quarantine cooking: 2020 was the year everyone began to bake homemade bread!

Seafood was having a moment in 2020, and this will continue into 2021 as beef prices remain high, and consumers and culinary professionals alike are exploring with seafood as a center of the plate alternative.

As delicious as seafood is though, the industrial fishing

industry has a history of leaving destruction in its wake, which is why sustainable seafood has become such a hot button topic. Everything from plant-based shrimp to sales of wild fish that are caught in ways that don’t damage ecosystems are on the radar.

And lastly, tinned fish is making a steady climb, appearing on menus as apps, small plates, and bar snacks.

SEAFOOD WILL BE THE PROTEIN OF CHOICE. PICTURED HERE IS A POKE BOWL WITH TUNA, FURIKAKE STEAM RICE AND LOTUS CRISPS. PHOTO COURTESY NXT CREATES FOR TUXEDOS AND TENNIS SHOES



TACOS, WILL FIND THEMSELVES ON MINTAHOE CATERING & EVENTS



SOMETHING'S FISHY

FOOD FOR FÊTES

CHICKPEA IS KING

Will we see chickpea everything in 2021? Now is the time to think beyond hummus and falafel, since chickpeas will be found in products such as

pasta, sliders, tofu, cereal, and even in desserts.

Rich in fiber and plant-based protein, chickpeas are the new cauliflower.

GARDEN VARIETY MENUS

Plant-based menus will continue to reign supreme in 2021 with the continued popularity of protein alternatives such as jackfruit, mung bean, and pulled oats. Garden fresh vegetables will be in high demand, as well as new emerging trends like jerky.

When we think of jerky, we may typically think of beef or fish jerky. Not anymore. All kinds of produce from mushrooms to jackfruit, even bananas, are being served jerky-style, providing a new, shelf-stable way to enjoy fruits and veggies.

PLANT-BASED MEALS AND FRESH GARDEN VEGETABLES WILL REIGN SUPREME. PHOTO COURTESY BRANCATO'S CATERING

(NOT SO) SWEET TREATS

2021 will usher in a major dessert shift. Gone are the days of overly sweet desserts, and instead we will see the rise of "sophisticated" desserts, with a mix of bitter elements. Think: dark bitter chocolate, salty flavors, subtle milk desserts, green tea ice cream, and ginger flavors.

Coffee will also be king in 2021, so expect to see coffee-flavored bars and granolas, smoothie boosters and booze, even coffee yogurt. You can get your java fix in so, so many new forms.



PHO WILL CONTINUE TO BE POPULAR
THROUGHOUT 2021. PHOTO
COURTESY CATERING BY MICHAELS



GETTING CORN

Corn is one of the most versatile foods on the planet, enjoyed in salads, on the cob, within melange, and ground up for tortillas. This corny trend will only continue into 2021 as everything from elote to esquites to comforting salads will continue to grow in popularity.

STREET CORN CRAB
SALAD. PHOTO COURTESY
CATERSOURCE

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FOOD FOR FÊTES

THE FERMENTATION EQUATION

Fermented foods and beverages are taking center stage in 2021, everything from kimchi to sauerkraut to kombucha, and Korean jangs.

Fermented foods containing probiotics are going to be more in demand for the health-conscious consumer. In addition to probiotics, many fermented foods also contain various vitamins, along with other nutrients, which help strengthen

the immune system, improve digestion, reduce the risk of certain diseases, and, because it is rich in fiber, might even help with weight loss.

ABOVE: FERMENTED FOODS, SUCH AS KIMCHI, WILL BE POPULAR IN 2021. PICTURED HERE IS KOREAN BRAISED BEEF BRISKET WITH HOMEMADE KIMCHI, JALAPEÑOS AND NATURAL JUS. PHOTO COURTESY TYSON AIRAKSINEN PHOTOGRAPHY FOR TOQUE CATERING



PIE IN THE SKY

Pizza has gone from comfort-food staple to shutdown star during the pandemic, upping the stakes. When we talk about pizza, we do not mean pepperoni or sausage, we are talking creative takes on the to-go favorite. With pizza, many other food trends can be incorporated to create something truly unique. Kimchi on pizza? Sure, why not? Comforting chicken and potatoes? Yes, sign me up! Vegan pizza? Of course!

"Pizza allows for the bringing in of trends that is

comfortable for consumers because they are comfortable with pizza," said Luke Zahm of Wisconsin's Driftless Café during a recent demonstration for the International Foodservice Editorial Council.

And lastly, consumers are looking for food that is high in immunity-boosting ingredients and that offer additional health benefits, which many of the above trends can easily accomplish.

2021 is shaping up to be a tasty year. ●

During "Forward Together 2021," attendees could "transport" between the East and West coasts where they could network with others. Photo courtesy AllSeated

"Everything associated with in-person events is going to change, but they will be back." —Scott Frankel, President, Animatic Media

Trends in Tech: IT'S ALL VIRTUAL

by Amber Kispert

PICTURE THIS. You are "walking" the exhibitor floor. You stop to chat with fellow attendees along the way while "live" entertainment delights everyone around. The emcee for the conference calls everyone to the main stage to take their "seats" for the day's keynote presentation. After popping around the conference for nearly two hours, it is time to head up to the roof for an after-party complete with stunning vistas, a dance floor, and a bar.

This may seem like the traditional formula for any conference (even The Special Event happening this July) but, this setup is anything but traditional. It is, in this example, the virtual conference software from AllSeated: exVo (allseated.com/exvo), where attendees can be immersed in a virtual world as an alternative to sitting on a Zoom meeting.

This is just one example of how technology will dramatically shift in 2021 as we continue to navigate COVID-19 and how live events will be conducted moving forward.

It is staying virtual for a while

Live events will continue to look different for the foreseeable future, which is why virtual software will remain the hottest trend in tech for the short term and beyond.

With these virtual conference platforms, event professionals can bring many of the elements of a traditional conference together in a virtual format, including keynote mainstage presentations, breakout meeting rooms,

networking, tradeshow and, in some cases, event after-parties.

With so many different options available, it can be difficult to determine which one is best suited for your needs. Frankel, whose company Animatic Media launched a virtual conference platform, Conference-On Demand + Live (conferenceondemand.net/home) in response to the pandemic, said the first step in finding the right solution is to ask every question you can possibly imagine.

"If someone tells you they have a virtual event platform, ask every question about what features they have," he said, "because you don't know what you don't know."

For example, not all platforms can accommodate breakout rooms, or perhaps they cannot accommodate

Be a Part of The Special Event 2021

Registration is now open for both The Special Event and Catersource Conference & Tradeshow, which will be co-located in Miami Beach, Florida July 19–22, 2021. Go to thespecialeventshow.com for conference information.

registration within the same system. It is truly imperative to do your research before selecting a platform. If you are looking for something that has chat and screen sharing capabilities, be sure to ask those questions.

"People take it for granted because they've seen it on other platforms," Frankel said. "No two platforms work the same."

In-person will be back

Even though virtual conferences will continue to be the norm for quite a while yet, in-person events will be back.

"Everything associated with in-person events is going to change," Frankel said, "but they will be back."

In-person events will see the emergence of cutting age technology to ensure the health and safety of attendees, Frankel said. He anticipates devices for touchless registration that incorporate temperature checks and automated printing of event badges, and the use of specialized cameras that can automatically sense crowding in areas to ensure attendees are remaining socially distanced.

"It has to all be so integrated now," he said.

And of course, expect automated sanitizing stations and the like to pop up at in-person events.

Additionally, expect to see a greater reliance on A/V as



Heidi Brice
Puff n' Stuff | Orlando



Margaret Brower
Bonura Hospitality | New York



Lizzy Desibia
Russ Morin Catering | Rhode Island



Brian Ingalls
Brancato's Catering | Kansas City



Art Menchaca
RK Group | San Antonio



Lisa Ware
Catering By Michael's | Chicago



Jeanne Whitworth
Butler's Pantry | Saint Louis



Meryl Snow - Moderator
Feastivities Events | Philadelphia



Director of Sales Town Hall



ABOVE: The Leading Caterers of America hosted a virtual Director of Sales Town Hall with the help of Conference On-Demand + Live. Photo courtesy Conference on Demand + Live



The National Oral Health Conference (NOHC) was hosted virtually in 2020 through Conference on Demand + Live. Photo courtesy Conference on Demand + Live

anytime soon. Even once in-person events resume, there will still be a virtual component in some capacity, Frankel said, which will lead to an entirely new world of hybrid events.

We will “meet” again

The past year has given rise to myriad new, exciting technologies. Everything from online ordering to virtual event platforms to unusual ways to “meet” and “hangout” in the inter-webs. One of those new pieces of tech that has been

we get back to gathering, Frankel said, as another way to ensure safety and social distancing.

“Everyone is expecting in-person events to have less attendees who are more spread out,” Frankel said, “so expect to see more screens, and more video and audio coverage because people are going to be physically distant in those rooms.”

Another option that has been growing in popularity is noise cancelling headphones, such as those from Silent Conference (silentconference.com/us) which can broadcast multiple channels without any interference from outside factors. Sit anywhere within the room and hear the session clearly.

“You’ll have the ability to space out your booth, space out your audience,” Silent Conference CEO Robbie Kowal said. “Additionally, people put those headphones on, and they get fully immersed in what they are hearing, which leads to a much more meaningful experience. People seem to put down their phones when they put on their headphones.”

There will also be more incorporation of interactive apps at in-person events for such things as food ordering, conference programs, and handouts.

How to handle certain pieces of technology will prove to be challenging as events come back, Frankel said, because of the sanitary and safety precautions. Are handheld microphones outdated? Will presenters be required to bring their own laptops and presentation clickers? So many of the things that we took for granted in the past during an event will require creativity and additional care.

“You can’t be too careful is the thing,” Frankel said. “It’s a double-edged sword because you want to show all of your attendees, all of your speakers, and all of your staff that you’re completely on top of safety here, but you also don’t want to scare somebody. You do not want to overdo it. There’s a very fine line there.”

And do not expect virtual platforms to go anywhere

generating a lot of buzz is Clubhouse, a new(-ish) audio-only app that can best be described as a live-interactive-podcasting-experience. Clubhouse’s profile rose in the wedding industry in the winter of 2020, in reaction to the ongoing pandemic and social isolation.

Renée Dalo, of Moxie Bright Events, gives the rundown: “Imagine this: You are on your lunch break and honestly, you’re a bit bored. You don’t remember the last time you spoke to someone outside of your home that wasn’t a client. You’re in the mood to chat. Or maybe just hear people chat? You could put on your favorite podcast, but you’ve listened to all of those already. Then you remember you signed up for that new app, Clubhouse. So you click in, and, well, there’s a LOT of cool conversation happening right now. Literally, *right now*. You heard that they don’t record, so if you want in, you have to dive in now—in the moment. Do you want to listen to ‘Photographers/Videographers Relationship: The Truth!’ or ‘Limitless You: Learn How to Learn and Accomplish Anything Faster’ or even ‘Wedding Pros Mindset Reboot’? Those are three of the roughly 20 different options that are available right now. So, listen in and not only learn something, but you can even raise your hand and contribute to the conversation. Suddenly, you don’t feel so alone. This is the magic of Clubhouse.”

Once you know your way around the app, you can contribute with confidence, and over time, it can become not only a community-builder but also a lead generation tool.

Technology is always changing. More innovative solutions are coming out every day, and this is only going to become even more important as we navigate the lasting effects of the pandemic. Be on the forefront of what events will look like as we move forward by getting in on the conversation and talk tech.

“It’s a chance to really blend fantasy and reality in a successful way,” said Kristin Banta, Creative Director for Kristin Banta Events Inc. ●



Safety with
a Side of

Whimsy

By Amber
Kispert

“We're still going to have to address this messaging, but why can't we do it in a more light-hearted way?”

— KRISTIN BANTA, Creative Director,
Kristin Banta Events



Leslie Price from In Any Event designed seating “pods” for a recent Dr. Seuss themed baby shower. Photo courtesy In Any Event

Event planners never have a shortage of hats to wear: photographer, designer, therapist, family counselor, cheerleader. The list goes on, and now another hat has been added to the mix: social distancing guru. As events return, planners are being challenged to adhere to new physical distancing guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19. They are rising to the challenge and getting creative.

“That’s what we’ve been relying on, it’s about thinking outside the box,” said Katie Kirby, Creative Director for Revolution Event Design & Production out of Baltimore. “People still want to enjoy, be together and do it safely, so it’s our responsibility to come up with how that can happen and how we can do that for them. We’re the people in charge of celebrating these moments.”

SAFELY SEATING

One of the biggest challenges that planners have faced during the pandemic is how to best socially distance guests during events. Keeping guests six feet apart, when the sole purpose of an event is to be together, has forced planners to think creatively about seating.

“You don’t want to go anywhere and

be so socially distanced that you feel alone,” Kirby said.

One option that has gained a lot of traction among event planners is the idea of “pods” or “bubbles” where those within a “COVID family” can be seated together in their own personal space, considerably distant from other groups.

“That will create a joint experience,” said Kristin Banta, Creative Director for Los Angeles-based Kristin Banta Events. “Even if we can’t interact, at least if we are going through things at the same time, that shared experience can lend itself to connectivity.”

In addition to having their designated seating area, planners have also started incorporating personalized bar carts, designated servers, and additional specialized services.

“Allowing guests to have their own space while still safely interacting is crucial to collective comfort,” said Leslie Price with New York’s In Any Event. “Giving guests their own space definitely reinforces social distancing guidelines and provides a place to retreat in comfort and safety without leaving the party altogether.”

Beyond seating pods, planners have also tapped into the idea of using specialized products to help safely seat and serve guests. For example, Revolution Event Design

BELOW: Revolution Event Design & Production has come out with bumper tables, which allow guests to move around freely while remaining six feet apart. Photo courtesy Revolution Event Design & Production





& Production designed “bumper tables” which are inflated tube tables that are designed with a hole in the middle, allowing guests to move themselves around using the wheels attached to the bottom of the table. And given the diameter of the tables, guests will always remain six feet apart.

“You can obviously see tables like this being fun,” Kirby said, “COVID or not.”

Another creative product that, while seen prior to the pandemic as a cute method of delivering food, has now become much more important. These are the “portal walls” where staff can stock from the back with pre-packaged food items to provide contactless delivery.

“Making a space beautiful and an experience, something that people don’t get to have all the time,” Kirby said, “that’s what works.”

VISUAL MESSAGING

Beyond seating, planners are finding creative ways to approach guest interactions, such as during cocktail hours, on the dancefloor, or even in the restrooms, where signage, decals, and other props come into play.

“It’s incorporating signage in ways that can subtly carry the message, so it’s not so much in your face,” Banta said. “The question becomes how can you make sure the messaging is there while still matching the tone of an event.”

Beyond signage that simply conveys “stay six feet apart,” floor decals for a dance floor, pillows designating that certain seats are “not available” have also been thrown into the mix. Many planners have found that guests are more likely to adhere to restrictions when they are expressed in a visually appealing way, Kirby said.

“People are honestly so desperate to have their events and have their parties, the pillows and all that is what makes it possible,” she said. “It’s what makes them feel better.”

Although not necessarily something to encourage social distancing, a visual color indicator of comfort has also risen in popularity, whether that is a mask, a colored wristband, bowtie or boutonniere.

“There’s a great disparity in collective comfort levels that needs to be addressed,” said Price, who has implemented a

red, yellow, green comfort color system. “Allowing guests to choose their social distancing comfort level color as they enter an event helps set a tone of safety and thoughtfulness that instantly puts guests at ease.”

WHY SO SERIOUS?

Regardless of which ways you choose to enforce social distancing restrictions, there is certainly something to be



FROM TOP LEFT: Pillows, mannequins, and other items can be placed on couches and on chairs to indicate that they are not available for seating due to social distancing restrictions. Photo courtesy Revolution Event Design & Production

Whimsical signage can help re-enforce social distancing without being lecturing. Photo courtesy Revolution Event Design & Production

Allowing guests to select different colored items to indicate comfort levels during gatherings will contribute to feelings of safety. Photo courtesy In Any Event

said for bringing a bit of fun into the mix. For example, Revolution Event Design & Production currently has six-foot signs in the shape of dachshunds and wine bottles. And Banta has heard of DJs playing *Don’t Stand So Close to Me* by the Police when problems arise. And who can forget about the glow-in-the-dark facemasks for the dancefloor that have become all the rage?

“Things can be messaged with a little bit of a wink,” Banta said. “We’re still going to have to address this messaging, but why can’t we do it in a more light-hearted way?”

Kirby agrees. Events will continue to be different for a while, and safety will continue to be a top priority, but who says you can’t still have fun?

“This pandemic is tragic, this is not something to be joked at, but that doesn’t mean people don’t want to celebrate their moments, even more now than ever because you’re lucky to have them,” she said. “You can make those precautions well designed, fun and creative and they’ll be a lot easier to take.” ●



ON TREND

Comedian **Harrison Greenbaum** has embraced the trend of virtual entertainment by setting up a production studio in his home. Photo by Tomasz Rossa / Photo Courtesy The Works/The Illusionists



The **Magical** Ingredient for Virtual Events

by **Amber Kispert**

HOSTING VIRTUAL EVENTS

comes with a fair share of challenges for planners. Now that video calls and online meetings have become the norm, keeping an attendees' focus on content can be easier said than done. A good rule of thumb to follow is that for every hour of a live presentation that holds an attendee's attention, only about half that time will work in a virtual setting.



Comedy magician **Simon Pierro** has set up an entirely new division of his business, World Wide Wonders, which fully embraced the virtual entertainment trend. Photo courtesy Martin Czernik



Comedy magician Simon Pierro has completely transitioned into virtual and hybrid events. Photo courtesy Santis

But there is a solution.

To combat waning attention spans while keeping attendees engaged, it's important to provide your virtual attendees with time to take a breath, get refocused, and have a little pick-me-up...and that's where entertainment comes in.

"Your brain simply works best when it gets to enjoy some kind of distraction and experiences relief from the business at hand," said comedy magician Simon Pierro (simonpierro.com). "It's in the very nature of magic, it temporarily transports you to a different world filled with astonishment and wonder. And it's a bonding moment for the audience as well."

By adding bite-sized entertainment breaks throughout your sessions, you will help your audience stay motivated to return to your virtual event.

"Imagine: suddenly, there's a professional comedian and magician (that's me!) with thousands of shows under his belt (still me!), interacting with everyone in the meeting, building a show based on the audience in real-time, cracking jokes and blowing minds, using the latest technology to incorporate all sorts of multimedia elements (can you believe it? still me!)," said comedian Harrison Greenbaum (harrisongreenbaum.com/virtual). "It's going to wake everybody up, put them in a great mood, and hopefully be the highlight of their day/week/lifetime."

INTERACTION IS THE KEY

There's a plethora of entertainment that can be sprinkled throughout any event, including:

- Fitness, sports or yoga sessions
- Dance lessons
- Karaoke-style sing-a-longs
- Interactive mentalist or magic tricks
- Cooking or cocktail competitions or demonstrations
- Stand-up comedians
- Improv comedy
- Game shows
- DJ battle

Whichever form of entertainment you go with, it is important to make it unique and engaging.

"If you have bands and DJs and all those kinds of things and all they're doing is playing a show without any interaction," said comedy magician Robert Strong (strongentertainment.com), "it's an absolute waste of their time because you can find that on YouTube."

Pierro mirrors Strong's sentiments. "I think in the virtual world you have to be even more personable and energetic," he said. "You have to find a way to emotionally connect with your audience through the screen."

"I don't ever want my audience to think they are watching a YouTube video or something that is pre-taped. It is my job to create the feeling that the audience is witnessing an event that is happening at this very moment, with and for them."

It is that interaction that will keep attendees engaged, alert, and ready to get back to the business at hand.

"It's really about making it so people can experience interactivity with a virtual event," said Scott Frankel, President of Animatic Media.

EMBRACING VIRTUAL

Many entertainers have wholeheartedly embraced the new virtual element of performances, many of whom have even created production studios in their homes.

"I really enjoy the medium of virtual shows: it combines some of the biggest benefits of being on TV, such as being able to reach a large, global audience directly in their homes, with some of the biggest benefits of performing live, such as being able to directly interact with the audience and to have their reactions immediately impact the show," Greenbaum said. "I've had a blast figuring out how to take my favorite material and make it work in this new medium and to create and work on new pieces that take advantage of the new format."

Going virtual has also allowed many entertainers to rework their acts into something completely new and exciting.

"I think it's important not to simply perform your existing repertoire in front of a webcam, instead of a live audience," Pierro said. "I decided to create an entirely new show. Instead of leaving the audience with the feeling of 'I wish I could have seen this live,' I wanted to create an experience just as unique, that leaves them saying: 'Wow, I've never witnessed anything like this before.'"

FUN FOR EVERYONE

Virtual performances have given entertainers the opportunity to connect with audiences on a completely different level.

"Virtual platforms have enabled me to incorporate the audience even more. In a darkened theater, I can only see the first few rows, but on a platform like Zoom, I can see everybody who has their camera on, which means everybody is in the front row if they want to be," Greenbaum said. "Also, my audience is watching from their homes or offices, which means the whole thing is

more personal and intimate and I can customize and tailor the show that much more—I've always drawn a lot of comedy from my back-and-forth with the audience, but now I can see your kitchen, living room, or bedroom, too? We're going to have that much more fun!"

The key to creating a great bite-sized entertainment piece is to make it personal and specialized to the audience at hand, Strong said. For example, jokes can center around a current project at work, or something about the company culture. And do not forget about the possibility of bringing in kids and pets into the fold since most attendees will still be sheltering at home.

"Everything we create is bespoke; we don't just look at the camera and perform a magic act," Strong said. "We can promote your product, create jokes that are just for you—each show is its own little, unique snowflake."

Obviously virtual entertainment cannot replace live in-person performances, but it can go a long way in making attendees feel more engaged and valued when sitting in a virtual conference for hours on end.

"In the end," Strong said, "all you really want to do is create the best experience for the attendees." ●

Many entertainers have retrofitted their homes with production studios as they continue to embrace virtual performances. Photo courtesy Andrea Katheder





Editor's note: *I had not made the connection until I began editing Scott's words, but I realized I know his parents, Mike and Lisa. I met them when they were members of the Leading Caterers of America group. My heart just filled! His parents are lovely people, and it is wonderful to see Scott continuing with the family business of providing beautiful experiences for the important moments of our client's lives.*

● ABOUT ACCEL RENTALS

My dad—local catering pioneer Mike Rabe—saw a need in the industry for a better rental company. Upon his urging, my brother and I started Accel Party Rentals & Design. I was 14. Today, at the newly renamed Accel Events and Tents, I sit as Founder/Visionary, sharing knowledge and experience with our operating team and helping to set goals that will take us to future success.

● What is the best piece of advice you have ever received?

Help first. By approaching relationships with that attitude, it builds fierce loyalty because people realize you bring value.

● What's next for Accel Rentals?

Technology. We have been focused on ensuring seamless information flow from top to bottom. This push for efficiency should reduce wasted labor and improve our client experience.

Legally Distanced from Social Gathering

By Scott Rabe

You've all seen it. The bombastic board chair who is sure his all-volunteer committee can produce the gala event of the year all by themselves. The do-it-yourself dad who figures he can buy some string lights and fabric online to make his daughter's bat mitzvah look just like those Instagram photos. The fact is, many people assume event production requires no special skill, talent, or training.

We industry folk should not be surprised that both politicians and the general public have shown a knee-jerk aversion to the concept of social gathering. The world blames social gatherings for propagating COVID-19, so much so that the term "social gathering" has been eternally poisoned.

It is up to us to change that narrative. We will never reopen, never survive, unless we are successful at making a simple distinction: Professional events are NOT social gatherings.

In Hawaii, multiple grassroots movements have sprung up under a unifying mission: to inspire legislation to immediately allow for legalized Structured Assembly. We seek to achieve seven goals:

1. **Redefine what our industry does as Structured Assembly**, which is separate and distinct from social gathering, in all legal and media references.
2. **Define Structured Assembly** as "a congregation of any number of people in a safe, socially distanced manner, professionally coordinated using professional vendors in a public or private setting."

3. **Define Professional Coordinator** as "any individual or group who has a valid business tax license and has a primary business focus of coordinating and organizing groups of individuals."

4. **Define Professional Vendor** as "any individual or group who has a valid business tax license and provides a good or service."

5. **Educate 33% of our statewide population** on the social and economic value of Structured Assembly.

6. **Achieve government recognition** of the distinction between Structured Assemblies and social gathering and achieve public support of this distinction.

7. **Immediately legalize Structured Assembly.**

Dear reader, please understand. This does not mean we can just go back to "normal." Intrinsic in this effort is a pivot and a promise to adapt to the virus and mitigate its effects on society. Fortunately, "adapt and overcome" is what event people do best, and we can let our capabilities shine as we create new ways to deliver amazing experiences to our guests in a safe and structured platform.

This revival has just begun here in Hawaii, and we still have a way to go. But if we do not speak up for ourselves, nobody will. Enlisting the help of appropriate professionals, publicists, analysts, lobbyists, and advocates, we believe that by achieving those seven simple goals we can change the perception of our value proposition. Let us make people realize that our skills, talents, and training are valuable and relevant as we fight the effects of COVID-19 and get the world back to business. ●

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